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(Autobiography)

House of the Seventh Cross

Denise Robins

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For
Peter Gartside

I

PERHAPS it is as well that none of us can dream what lies ahead, although I often used to think when I was a teenager that I would adore to know the future, and loved having my fortune told.

On the day that I, Rose Lowe, landed by tourist flight in Palma, I certainly did not realise what Fate had in store for me.

I was on holiday. My adored mother had died some weeks ago leaving me quite alone. My father, too, was dead, and I lived and worked for a firm of lawyers in Bristol, as secretary to the junior partner. I had been working very hard and I was tired and sick of the dusty old office and endless legal documents. I needed this break, I'd saved up for it and here I was at Palma Airport.

It was new and exciting, hot and noisy. But to me quite wonderful . . .

I'd made up my mind to take this holiday in Majorca alone and to walk from one side of the island to the other. I left the colourful airport behind me and started out for the Puerto de Pollensa on the north side of the island. One of my friends with whom I shared a flat had a godmother there. I thought I'd start off by going to call on her.

I soon left Palma. I couldn't bear the crowds. I had had enough of them in Bristol. I wanted the mountains. The white road ahead of me looked long and hot and dusty but all the same I immediately fell in love with Majorca. I had

come in time to enjoy the glory of the beautiful almond trees—there were seven million of them on the island, so my guide book informed me.

I daresay I looked odd to the people who passed me in their cars. I was trudging along in my straight pink cotton dress, short white coat over my arm, fair straight hair which I wore rather long, falling across my cheeks, and carrying a small suit-case.

I wasn't particularly conceited but feminine enough to be pleased when an old Spanish peasant astride a strong, sturdy donkey, called out to me:

"*Buenos! Muy guapa* senorita!"

I knew enough Spanish to feel flattered because he said that I was beautiful.

I stopped only to pull out a bottle of sunburn cream and cover my throat and arms with it. I was glad of my dark glasses because the glare from those hard blue skies was terrific. But I had never seen anything lovelier than the purple mountains, the little white cottages brilliant with the scarlet, shiny pimentos that the peasants hang up to dry, and the giant cacti with their spiky silver-green leaves and pinky-orange fruit hanging from them like small gay lanterns.

I walked until I was tired then sat down and leaned my aching back against an olive tree, examined my map and decided to step off the main road where there were too many cars, and take a smaller, quieter route.

That switch from the busy highway was the first move toward my ultimate destiny which till now had been hidden from me.

But when I got up to resume my walk, suddenly I heard the honk-honk of a horn, looked round and saw a long racy-looking car with a silver bonnet moving toward me.

An expensive-looking foreign car. I didn't seem to be able to escape the traffic. I stepped aside to watch it pass but the driver, a woman, hooted, waved, and pulled up beside me.

"Hey there," she said, "do you speak English? You look English. Anyway, I can't imagine anyone Spanish walking in this blistering heat just for the fun of it. Wouldn't you like a ride?"

Gratefully I accepted the offer.

"Jolly nice," I said heartily, proving my English blood beyond all doubt, so ending my vow to refuse lifts.

We laughed together.

She opened the car door for me. I climbed in beside her, only too glad to put my Airways bag and suit-case in the back, and sink on to the deep-cushioned seat beside the driver. I now had a chance of seeing my Good Samaritan at close quarters. She was younger than I had thought at first. She had been wearing black glasses and a big floppy hat which shaded her face. As she took off the hat and glasses and smiled at me pleasantly, I could see that she was about my own age. We were of a similar type; curiously so. Both very fair, blue-eyed, slimly built, and about the same height. But the stranger was not really like myself. She was expensively turned out, wearing a well-tailored yellow linen suit with a crisp white shirt. Her hair was not loose, like mine, but tied in a pony-tail, with a broad yellow ribbon. She wore three gold bracelets, and I particularly noted the brooch pinned to the lapel of her coat. It was shaped like a large flower with stamens and corolla of emeralds. Quite gorgeous, I thought. I had already noted the extravagant-looking black and white leather luggage on the back seat. Beside her, she had placed a beautiful tapestry-covered bag with huge black leather handles—Italian, I was sure. Her

long oval finger nails were a much better shape than my own, I thought ruefully. Quick to note detail, I also saw that she wore a rather curious ring for a girl—a masculine onyx signet ring, on the little finger of her left hand.

Now she pulled a packet of American cigarettes from her bag, offered me one which I refused, and lit one for herself, using a small gold lighter which looked as costly as everything else. What a fascinating person, I thought. Who could she possibly be?

We began to talk.

"I feel a bit guilty," I said. "I set myself out to walk to Puerto de Pollensa. I've only done about five miles, then I take a lift. Pretty weak!"

Her big blue eyes under their long thick lashes gave me a surprised look.

"I can't think why anybody would want to walk when they can drive," she drawled.

"I don't possess a car and I hate buses—so I walk," I laughed.

"I don't think I have ever been in a bus," she said.

"Snob," I laughed again, wrinkling my nose at her.

I was pleased when she laughed back as I was a bit afraid I had been rather rude. "I didn't mean that really," I added.

"Oh, but I *am* a snob," she agreed. "*And* a sybarite. I adore luxury and I am afraid I am spoiled, because I have always had it."

"Lucky you!"

I could see her gaze wandering carelessly over me, possibly noting the fact that I was wearing that frightful cheap shift that didn't fit very well; also that I had no jewellery—only the little wrist-watch on a leather strap which my

mother had given me for my eighteenth birthday. She showed white even teeth in a friendly smile which encouraged me. I could feel that she *wanted* to be friends. I said:

"It was terribly nice of you to pull up for me."

"Oh, I welcome your company."

"And what a gorgeous car!" I sighed.

"It's a Renault. The body was specially built for me in Paris. They allow Renaults on this island, which is just as well, because if you've got an English car you may have it impounded for months."

"You didn't bring it over with you?"

"No, my father's old chauffeur brought it over to Palma a week back and left it for me in a garage. They met my plane with it today."

We exchanged names. Hers, she told me, was Rune le Motte. An odd name, I thought.

"I have never heard of *Rune* before," I said.

"I am possibly the only one in existence," she smiled. She had a nervous habit of flicking the ash off her cigarette with the tip of her little finger. "I had a romantic-minded godfather who was a classical scholar. To him the word *Rune* was a mark of mysterious, magical significance. For instance, in the old days there was a Runic calendar. It evolves from the word *run*, meaning a whisper or a secret council from which the English word *round* has sprung. So, to please god-papa, I was called Rune."

I blinked at her.

"All rather complicated but exciting. And it's a beautiful-sounding name. It suits you."

"Your name–Rose–suits you," she returned graciously.

As we talked longer, I gathered that we had arrived by the same plane, though I don't remember having seen her,

but of course, she had been travelling V.I.P. and I, tourist-class.

She, too, was bound for Pollensa—but the village itself, she told me, not the Port. She had driven off the main road because she, also, liked to avoid the traffic.

As we moved along the sunlit road she began to question me about myself.

I told her a little of what must seem to her, I imagined, an unexciting life. She openly declared that she 'wondered how I could stick all that typing all day in a lawyer's office'. She also expressed great surprise when I said that I had reached the age of twenty but never had a really serious love affair.

There was one boy, a clerk in the office, who took me out occasionally, but I found him dull and uninspiring, and there had been a doctor I rather fell for, in the hospital where my mother had lain for months with a fractured hip. Peter was the most attractive man I had ever met up till then, with that devilish glint in the eye that can be quite fatal to a girl.

"Why didn't you do anything about him?" Rune, my new friend, asked me.

Rather sadly I explained that Dr. Wright was already married so we decided not to see each other any more.

"Oh, well," said Rune in her gay, easy way, "I can see you're the romantic, idealistic type. I'm afraid I'm not. I'm always having love affairs but I don't really mind whether they're married or not."

"Oh!" I exclaimed rather lamely.

She laughed and gave me a sidelong glance from her beautiful blue eyes and said:

"Shocked?"

"Not a bit," I said indignantly.

"It doesn't do to get too tied up with anyone in particular," went on Rune, "although I'm bound to say I'm a bit shackled at the moment. I've rather left my heart behind me in Paris, still it's very elastic. It always springs back into place."

We laughed together. It wasn't difficult to laugh and be friendly with Rune le Motte. I warmed toward her—especially as she seemed to show quite an interest in me. She kept saying:

"It's quite fabulous how alike we are physically. I can't get over it."

"I don't suppose we're very alike in character," I ventured.

"Too true, honey. I'm a hard nut and you're a softie."

I bit my lip, wondering if I was all that 'soft'. My mother used to tell me that I was like my father—in his day a lawyer, and a man of strong character. I was certainly a determined person. But, somehow, this girl Rune gave me an inferiority complex.

As we drove along, I watched a couple of farm-workers in the field driving their blindfolded horses round and round a windmill.

"That's interesting," I said.

"What?" asked Rune.

I nodded toward the patient animals trudging their circular route.

"Isn't that primitive! There's a shortage of water during the summer in Majorca, you know. The farmers still have to bring the water up from the wells."

"So you've read it all up before coming out here?" laughed Rune.

"Yes, I have," I said, and coloured. Once again she made

me feel inferior as though I should have been more like herself—and she was the last girl in the world to study a guide book—of that I could be certain.

"Tell me about yourself," I said suddenly.

So she gave me a resumé of her life—that life that was so different from mine.

She was obviously the spoilt child of fortune. I was just a very ordinary girl with no money behind me and no prospects. I had in fact had to give up the one great passion of my life, which was music. Before my father died and when we were not so poor, I had actually studied the piano seriously under a Professor of Music in Bristol and adored it. It had been rather a bitter pill for me to swallow when I had had to abandon it and do a secretarial job.

However, I forgot about myself: I sat entranced, listening to Rune le Motte and the strange story she had to tell about herself.

2

HER father was French; her mother, American. There had been a divorce when Rune was a small child, since when the mother had died. This seemed to have affected Rune not at all. She was honest enough to describe herself as 'a hard nut to crack'—lacking in affection, except for the fair, handsome father who had adored her. She had been born in London and brought up by an English governess. Later she went to an English finishing school. She spoke perfect French, and English without a trace of American accent. She had always lived in luxury and been thoroughly spoiled, very much my opposite, I thought. She admitted that she had no money sense and liked to spend freely.

There was only one thing she liked more than money; that was freedom. She hated any kind of discipline. Conventional ties horrified her. Laughingly she boasted that she had defied all attempts made by both governesses or school teachers to bring her to heel. So, at nineteen, she joined what was, I presumed, a sort of Left Bank beatnik crowd in Paris where she became the idol of her companions because of her beauty, her money, and her expensive car.

I asked her if she was engaged, and she took off her glasses so that for a moment I could see the derision in her cornflower-blue eyes.

"No, my pet, the shackles of matrimony are not for little Rune. I've got masses of boy-friends. My special one is crazy about me. His hair is too long and I've threatened to

ditch him unless he cuts it. I'm not really a Beatnik at heart."

"You don't look one," I said with genuine admiration. I found her most elegant.

"Am I boring you talking so much about myself?" she suddenly asked, "or shall I go on? Because it's really quite a tale."

"Go on," I said, "please. It is like something out of a book."

"Everything we do is, I suppose," she said reflectively. "Some of us could be called characters out of a serious novel, couldn't we? And some come out of light romance and others from whodunits. I'd like to be a character out of a whodunit, but I haven't yet had the luck to meet a fascinating criminal."

I stared at her, open-mouthed. I'd never come across such a girl. I envied her her worldly wisdom. At twenty-one she was a cynic. I was only a few months younger but felt myself to be on the mere threshold of life, still seeking for the romance at which she jeered.

She went on talking.

Six months ago, her whole life changed. Her father succumbed to an unexpected coronary thrombosis. He had actually been talking at the time of his death to a banker friend on the *Bourse*.

Rune genuinely mourned him at the time, she said, and I could believe it. He seemed to have been the one and only person in her life for whom she really deeply cared. Then she had been subjected to another shock. She discovered that her 'rich' father was on the verge of ruin, and before he could pull away from the abyss—death had pushed him over the edge. Once his estate was settled Rune found herself with nothing but the contents of their Paris apartment, some

jewellery that had belonged to her mother, and a small income from her maternal grandfather in America. This in English currency amounted only to about three hundred pounds a year.

"It sounds a lot to me," I said.

She looked at me pityingly.

"I spend more than that annually on my clothes."

"Oh!" I said humbly.

But now Rune was explaining why she had come to Majorca.

Death struck at the le Motte family yet again. This time her father's brother Paul, who lived in Majorca, suddenly died.

Rune had never met her Uncle Paul. She only knew that he was twenty years older than her father, and that there had been a violent quarrel between the two brothers, years before she was born, and even the war had not reunited them. She had not been very interested in this unknown uncle, so had never asked about him, although on one or two occasions her father spoke of Paul, describing him as a rather scholarly man who wrote dull books. There was also some talk about Papa having once needed money to pull off some big financial deal, and brother Paul refused it, so Papa neither wrote to him nor saw him again. He had never married. It was for his house in Pollensa that Rune was now bound.

"I'm being blackmailed," she went on with that light rather derisive laugh of hers.

She beat a little tattoo on the wheel of the car as she drove. The shape of those hands were a little like my own, among the other similarities.

"Yes, I'm being blackmailed," she repeated. "My uncle

seems to have relented on his death-bed and left his money to me, being his one and only niece and next-of-kin. He has lived in Pollensa for the last ten years with a housekeeper and a secretary. Just before he died he was writing a history of the Balearic Islands. His secretary, who was resident, is called Mark Jervis. Papa's solicitor in Paris was informed by Mark and Uncle Paul's lawyer in Palma that he left quite a considerable fortune. But the silly old imbecile made me his sole beneficiary only on condition I would live in his house and look after it, plus his books and treasures and—"

"But that sounds wonderful!" I interrupted.

"Wait! The final condition is much less attractive. Uncle Paul in his final years became dependent upon Mark Jervis —he's twenty-seven now and a bachelor. Uncle Paul appears to have been very grateful to him for all his help and devotion. Mark seems to have been everything to this old man—secretary, chauffeur, general factotum and companion. He left Mark some money, I believe. He wanted the bulk to go to his own flesh and blood, but only if I, his so-called heiress, would agree to marry this secretary fellow. If I don't agree, I forfeit a fortune. What do you think of that?"

"Well, it really *is* like something out of a thriller," I gasped. "Very dramatic."

Rune pulled up the Renault and lit another cigarette, frowning deeply.

"Too damned dramatic for me and I'm not going to be coerced into marrying Mr. Mark Jervis or any other man, even if I lose the money. I refuse to. Wouldn't you?"

I tried to think. Faced with such a vital problem, my brain never worked very quickly. My answer when I gave it was, I suppose, typical of my romantic attitude toward life.

"I couldn't marry any man unless I was in love with him —and certainly never for money."

Rune snapped down the lid of her lighter and gave a hard laugh.

"I don't believe in love, and I'd do a lot for money, except lose my independence. I shall not marry Uncle Paul's secretary, neither will I live in his gloomy old house on this island. It's far too limited a life here. Not bad fun in the summer, so they tell me. You can swim and water-ski, and so on. But deadly in the winter."

"You could always go away—" I began feebly.

"With a husband to put down his foot and tell me I couldn't if *he* wanted to stay here? No, I'm not risking that or chaining myself to anyone in order to get Uncle Paul's fortune. But I must say I wish I could get it *without* the man," she added with another short laugh.

"Why have you come all this way if you don't mean to stay?"

"Oh, I have certain plans. I thought I might try and stick the awful boring life in my uncle's house for a few months, but once the really bad weather starts, I fully intend to fly to the Bahamas."

"Why there?"

"Nicki—my boy-friend in Paris—has a wealthy godfather with a villa in Nassau. Nicki is going over to Nassau to try and make himself popular. I shall join him there."

"Then you are in love with *him*."

She flung me a pitying look.

"I have already told you I don't believe in love, but he and I get on terribly well and we both value our freedom."

"What about children?" I asked, feebly.

"Oh, heavens, I don't want children," she retorted, and

put her foot down on the accelerator, driving now a little dangerously fast for the winding road which had poor visibility owing to the high vegetation on either side. She made me gasp on one occasion when we reached a crossroad, and she did not see the notice: *Pollensa*, until the last moment, then swerved the car round, with the tyres screaming.

She then implied that she already regretted coming to Majorca and was in two minds whether or not to about-turn and go straight back to Paris. She repudiated my suggestion that she might find Mark Jervis attractive. She had read the correspondence he had sent her after the death of his patron and he had what she called 'small, niggardly handwriting' and was sure he had a mean disposition. Rune declared that she could read character by handwriting. Also she had seen his photograph. He had sent her an enlarged snapshot of himself and her uncle standing together in the garden. Uncle Paul had looked a tall, stooping old man—handsome in his way, rather like her father—but Mark was short and thin, and wore horn-rimmed glasses and was, she was sure, Rune said with a laugh, 'a ghastly little man'. No fortune would tempt her to marry *him* and it wouldn't be any good doing the dirty on him and just going through the ceremony in order to get the money, then clear out. Her uncle must have foreseen what she might do, so made that further condition in the will that she must remain in the House of the Seventh Cross (Uncle Paul's home). She was certainly not going to do *that*.

I repeated the name:

"*House of the Seventh Cross*."

It sounded interesting to me, yet strangely sinister. Why the *Seventh Cross*? I asked Rune. She told me:

The route from the village up to the monastery was

known as the Calvario. There were three hundred and sixty-five steps leading to the top, parallel to a rather rough steep road for traffic. Along the way to the monastery stood the twelve stone crosses marking the twelve Stations of the Cross which illustrated the Passion of Christ as He went to His Crucifixion.

Twelve houses had also been built at various times along this sacred route, and every year the Catholic inhabitants of Pollensa headed by their priest climbed the hill and prayed before the Crosses.

The oldest of these houses—the Seventh Cross—belonged to Paul le Motte, but Rune knew little more about it as she had only seen a few photographs sent to her after her uncle died. But she did know—Mark had told her so in a letter—that the House of the Seventh Cross had been built beside two beautiful old watch-towers. They overlooked the village of Pollensa away to the mountains on one side and the sea on the other. Paul le Motte had apparently enlarged and modernised the building. Rune admitted that it looked magnificent.

"But not for little me," she ended dryly.

She then confessed brazenly that she meant to try and get as much money as she could out of her uncle's executors before she surrendered her final claim to the Will. She could, of course, have refused to accept the whole plan and gone to Nassau straightaway with Nicki Mesurier; but, Rune said, there was a chance that he might not be a success with his godfather. If the old man didn't play, Nicki would be broke, so Rune had decided not to turn her uncle's offer down completely—for the moment. She would take a look at Mark, and the house, and await developments.

I must confess that this disgusted me. I felt uneasy about

Rune. But she had all the fascination of the wicked. I couldn't stop listening to her, watching her, thinking how alluring men must find her. What awaited *me*, after a fortnight of hitch-hiking in Majorca, except the old monotonous routine in Bristol? For Rune—well, who was to know what excitements destiny had in store for her?

I started rather humbly to tell her about myself, but the parentless, almost friendless Rose, must seem very dull to a girl like Rune. But she was quite willing to listen, so I told her about my job and old Wilkins and the life I led in Bristol.

It was then that the accident happened.

Another blind corner. Rune driving too fast. The wheels of the big car skidded and—so I learned in time to come—the car bounced, turned a somersault and ended in a deep ditch on one side—*my* side. I got the worst of it. I remember little except hearing Rune scream and feeling a violent impact against my head and left shoulder.

Then a blackout.

I recovered consciousness with no sense of time or place, to find that I had been dragged out of the car and was lying on a bank with a coat as a pillow under my head. Rune le Motte, a cigarette between shaking fingers, and looking white and scared, sat beside me, staring at me. As my eyes opened she cried out:

"Thank God! I thought you were dead."

"What's happened?" I asked rather drunkenly.

"We have had an accident. My car's in the ditch and I owe you an apology, to put it modestly," she said with her hard little laugh. Even after this catastrophe she seemed unmoved —with nerves of steel. "I drove too damned fast."

"Oh, my head!" I groaned.

"Well, I don't think anything else is broken. You can move your legs, can't you?"

I obliged by moving them. I thought then that there must be a kindly streak in this strange girl, because she had put her floppy hat across my head to shield me from the blaze of the sun, and now unscrewed a flask which she held to my lips.

"Good French brandy. Not that Spanish stuff. Take some," she urged.

As I swallowed a few sips, I heard Rune as though from a long distance telling me that she had been miraculously unhurt. Not even a scratch—but she had been badly shaken by the sight of my injuries. She could see a deep cut on the side of my head which was still bleeding. With some foresight she had made a pad of her handkerchief, soaked it in the cognac and staunched the bleeding that way. She seemed very efficient. No car had come along during the last half-hour, she said, while she had been sitting beside me. Only a young boy on a bicycle. Using her limited Spanish she had told this child to fetch help. He seemed to understand and rushed off. But, of course, it would take him some time. What a fool she had been, Rune grumbled, to take this by-road instead of keeping to the main route. We were in the 'wilds'. We could see nothing but long stretches of pasture, hundreds of almond trees, and not a human dwelling in sight.

I groaned a little, feeling a severe pain in my head. I shut my eyes. Rune touched my hand. Her fingers were cold despite the sun.

"Listen," she said, "I have a wonderful idea. It has been forming since I met you and heard your story, and told you mine. You are alone in the world—you said so. So am I.

You're romantic, and even in the short time I have known you, I am quite sure you are easy-going and have a far less complex nature than mine. Now, we look strangely alike—our colouring is exact. You could claim my passport and I, yours. I have a marvellous plan. From now on *you will be Rune le Motte*. You will go to my uncle's house in Pollensa and live in luxury. No one there has ever seen me so no one can question your identity. *I* shall temporarily become *Rosamund Lowe*, which will spell freedom for me. I refuse even to consider marriage with Mr. Mark Jervis. If *you* like him and fall in love with him, so much the better. Go ahead, we can have a financial understanding. If not, run away and leave it all to little Rune. It's too easy. I shall give you my luggage in exchange for yours. I shall go back to the Airport and take a ticket straight home to Paris. Then I shall go out to Nicki in Nassau. I made a mistake in ever thinking I could bear the idea of leaving him and joining Uncle Paul's establishment. No harm can come of this plan, Rose, and if it doesn't work, we can always switch over again."

"Don't be ridiculous, of course we can't—" I began stupidly, but I only saw Rune's face through a veil. I was getting hazier and hazier. The pain in my head increased until it became so violent that my whole body shivered. I felt scared, too. I could no longer take in the crazy things Rune was saying. Her schemes were mad—outrageous. She kept bending over me, repeating feverishly:

"Do this for me. You may enjoy it. Get what you can out of living in luxury as an heiress. Just be *me* for a little while. I regret ever having come here. I can't face it. Rose, do this, *please* . . . You have nothing to lose and a lot to gain."

Those were the last words I heard before I slipped back into total unconsciousness.

3

WHEN I opened my eyes again I remembered nothing—literally nothing of what had happened to me. At first I thought I was at home—my old home with my mother. Feeling sick and stupid I put up a hand and felt bandages. My head hurt. The left side of my shoulder hurt, too, when I tried to move.

"Mummy!" I moaned the word softly.

At once somebody who had been sitting in a chair beside me got up and leaned over me.

"The senorita is awake—*muy bien* . . ."

It was a nice girlish voice, speaking half in English, half in Spanish.

The speaker moved to the window and pushed open the shutters admitting sufficient sunlight to show me the room in which I was lying. But I shivered and closed my eyes again. I had no interest in my surroundings. I felt too ill. I no longer called upon my mother. I did at least realise that it was no use, because she was dead. Yet how or when she had died was not clear to me. I was completely confused.

A moment later a door opened. Somebody else came in to the room—this time a youngish man. He wore light-blue slacks and a blue sports shirt. Struggling with my confusion, I peered up at him. But I didn't recognise him. His face was thin, sallow, with strangely light-grey eyes behind horn-rimmed glasses. The *glasses* seemed familiar but no more. Then he spoke, in English. His voice was dry and staccato.

"Anita has just told me you are conscious. I'm thankful. We have all been very worried."

He took off the spectacles, wiped them and coughed as though a trifle nervous.

I tried to answer but my lips felt dry and a little swollen. No words came. He added:

"I won't stay and bother you now. We will talk later. Anita has gone to fetch you a drink."

Then I blurted out a good English word:

"Tea."

"You want tea? I will see that you get it. I think Anita was making coffee. We drink such a lot of it here."

After the man had gone, I lay waiting for my drink. I felt better. I could see now that I was in a high-ceilinged room with a round turret, and six tall windows. These were wide open, shuttered from the outside. The curtains, of green and white pattern, were drawn back.

From the middle of the ceiling there hung an old-fashioned silver chandelier with four electric candles. I could see that the floor was of polished wood, laid with white fringed rugs. My mind cleared, and gradually everything grew plain to me. The furniture was less gloomy than the rest of the room, I thought, lying there in my dreamy, lazy state. French, charming, with a design of hand-painted flowers and gilded edges. There was one massive serpentine golden chest, and a huge Spanish oak press or cupboard. The tables and chairs were of various shapes and designs; for the most part delicate, painted on slender gilded legs, and with white satin-padded seats and back. The whole room spelt luxury. The thing that pleased me most was the big Spanish pottery bowl, full of flowers, standing on the dressing chest. Scarlet carnations—not just

the odd half-dozen—but hundreds of these beautiful blooms. I had never seen anything so magnificent.

The walls were papered in dark, restful green; a huge, gilded mirror hung one side of my bed. On the other, an exquisite painting of a Majorcan seascape—deeply blue. The purple of the mountains, the silver tints of the olive-trees were beautiful in the frame of dark-rose velvet and light, carved wood.

I had never really seen a more elegant bedroom. My bed, itself, was worthy of note as with ever-sharpening sense of perception I took in the rest of my surroundings. I lay in a double bed with transparent white curtains drifting from a gold coronet that was cunningly fixed to the wall.

The air was cool despite the hot sun. I learned afterwards that the whole of this house was air-conditioned, and that most of the luxuries had been added after Paul le Motte's death, at the instigation of his 'beloved secretary and friend, Mark Jervis'.

Now the little maid, Anita, returned with my tray; which was set with an expensive-looking white and rose china tea-service. I struggled into a sitting position. I suddenly found that I was hungry as well as thirsty. I drank two cups of the fragrant tea (Lapsang Suchan), ate the thinly-cut bread and butter, and one round, sugared Spanish biscuit.

"*Muy bien*," said Anita. She was obviously one of the staff. She wore a blue cotton overall and the canvas rope-soled shoes they called *espadrilles*. She was a pleasant-faced Mallorquin with a plump face, bright, dark eyes, and black hair dressed in a big bun on top of her head.

I began to feel better. I said:

"I am sorry but I—it is too silly of me—but I can't *remember* anything. Where am I?"

"In the House of the Seventh Cross," said Anita, beaming. "It is the *casa* of the Senor le Motte. He died two months ago, the poor senor. Every day I come here from the village to help. There live in this house only one cook-housekeeper, Renata. She out today, so Anita look after the senorita."

House of the Seventh Cross. I whispered the name aloud. It had a strangely familiar sound yet it conveyed nothing to me. It had a sinister sound, I thought. I must have had an accident. That was it. These bandages on my head and my bruised shoulder meant that I had been injured somehow, somewhere. But I had lost my memory. I *couldn't remember my own name.*

I clutched at the Spanish maid's arm, my heartbeats quickening.

"I'm sure I am in the wrong house. I oughtn't to be here. I should be in a hospital."

I was scared. The pain throbbed in my head again. I really was scared. The kind little maid's chubby face looked distressed.

"*Momento*, senorita . . . !"

She turned and hurried from the room. Soon there came a knock on the door. The young man with the glasses—the one I had seen before—came in. He pulled a chair up beside my bed and sat down on the edge, a little nervously, I thought.

"Please," I said. "I don't understand why I am in this house."

"No," he said quietly. "I know you don't. We have talked together before, although you have obviously forgotten it. You recovered consciousness for a few moments when we first brought you back. Then you passed out again!"

"Brought me *here* from *where*? I'm sure I have never spoken to you before today—" I began.

He interrupted:

"Yes, you have. You just don't remember. Our *medico*, Dr. Fernandez, has seen you several times. He says it is a case of concussion and temporary loss of memory. He warned us that you might be confused when you woke up. But it will soon pass. Soon you will remember everything."

I was trembling suddenly. I didn't find this thin young man with his cold, pebble-grey eyes at all sympathetic; neither did I like his rather smug, self-confident manner.

"Would you mind telling me more," I said. "My name—who *am* I. Do you know that?"

"Of course. You are Rune; Rune le Motte."

I stared. That name, like the House of the Seventh Cross, rang a bell in my dislocated mind, yet I remained uncertain and even disbelieving. For all I knew, of course, I might be Rune le Motte, but I really didn't feel that I was. *Rune* was a funny name. I had heard it before, yet I hadn't . . .

I grew suddenly angry and tearful.

"I am sure that's not my real name. I don't understand. Isn't there anybody who *really* knows me?"

The young man looked at me with pity.

"I don't suppose you remember the names of any of your friends."

"No, I'm afraid not."

"In your last letter from Paris you told me that Uncle Paul —I always called him that—was your last surviving relative. But poor Uncle Paul has been taken from us."

I don't know why, but I was again conscious of the unattractive personality of this man who sat beside me. An unctuous note had crept into his voice. Why, I wondered, couldn't he have said "Poor Uncle Paul has died"? Why that awful "taken from us" as though one couldn't bear the

honest word 'death'? Whoever I was, I began to fear that I must be slightly irritable by nature. Certainly this man irritated me.

"Lie still and don't worry," he said soothingly. "Dr. Fernandez said that under no circumstances are you to try to force your memory. Just let it all come back gently. It will. But meanwhile, if it's any help or comfort to you, I'll tell you exactly what happened—all about your arrival in Majorca and the unfortunate accident."

"And who are you?" I asked rather sharply.

"I am Mark Jervis."

That conveyed little or nothing to me. He went on:

"Ten years ago when I was only a boy of seventeen, Uncle Paul came in contact with my father who was at that time staying at an hotel in Madrid with me. Your uncle was there picking up information at the museums for a book he was writing. He was a Spanish scholar, you know, and very erudite. My father died later that year. Mr. le Motte had taken a fancy to me—and because I showed some small talent in writing, myself, and could type, etc., he offered to give me a job. To bring me back here to Pollensa as his resident secretary. He was growing older. Travelling tired him. I soon found I had to go often to Spain to make his researches for him. At the same time I took a course in Spanish and book-keeping. Your uncle, being a wealthy man, needed a personal assistant who could eventually take over all the finances, keep his accounts, etc., and leave him in peace to write. This I did—er—to his satisfaction."

Mark Jervis put a closed fist to his mouth and stifled a cough. Once again I thought this rather a silly show of mock modesty. He added:

"For the last six years I have run the entire house and

estate. Your uncle owned hundreds of acres between here and Formentor, you know. But I mustn't tire you with too much business talk."

"No, don't," I said, rather rudely. "I'm quite dazed. My head hurts. I feel awful and I just can't *believe* that my name is Rune or that I am even remotely connected with Mr. le Motte, or this house."

Mark changed colour. He looked rather annoyed but gave a tolerant laugh.

"Oh, I assure you, you are! I apologise for boring you—I was only trying to put you in the picture so far as the house and my part in it are concerned. You see—er—you and I will be—er—working together in the future."

I did not understand and I ignored what Mark said. I asked for more information about my own place in the picture. He then told me that Uncle Paul, after long years of quarrelling with my father, had relented at the end, left a legacy to Mark in recognition of his services, and me, the residue. So Mark had sent for me in order to make my acquaintance, and live here in Pollensa for a while so as to see how I got on with him.

"How I get on with you?" I repeated. "But *why*?"

Mark changed colour again. He glanced at me rather furtively, I thought.

"I won't bother you with details now. It is so necessary that you should not start worrying."

"I am sure I am not the worrying kind," I snapped.

"Then you do remember something about yourself," he said drily.

I ignored this and went on:

"Tell me more, please, about my arrival here. You say this is a house in the Calvario—up above the village of

Pollensa. How did I get here? How did the accident occur? Who was with me?" I paused.

He told me that the Renault Agents had received instructions to meet me at Palma Airport when I landed from Paris, and hand my new car over to me. This, he said, had been at my own request because I had stressed in my letters that I was crazy about cars and couldn't bear life without one. Mark, himself, had wanted to meet me but I had failed to wire time or date of my arrival, so he had had no alternative but to prepare my room and wait. Then, to his horror, the police had telephoned that afternoon to say that they had found me and the wrecked Renault in the ditch, about ten miles out of Palma. With me was an English girl who had been in the car with me but was miraculously unhurt. She told the police that her name was Rosamund Lowe and that she was on a walking tour, and had thumbed a lift from me. She said I had driven too fast and lost control when going round a bend. Miss Lowe was fair and blue-eyed, Mark added; not unlike me, but not as *attractive*. (This was said with exaggerated courtesy and a gleam in his eye, which somehow I found very unpleasing.)

I muttered the name of my supposed companion.

Rosamund Lowe. Now that name *did* mean something to me. It aroused all kinds of phantasmagoria—like shadowy dreams, and apparitions—floating in a ghostly way through my mind. I heard myself cry out:

"*Rose!*"

Mark nodded.

"Yes, that was the name of this girl you picked up in the car. She says you had never met before you offered her the lift. She was on her way to the Puerto de Pollensa. She was most concerned about you. She came here with you when

we brought you to this house. She said she would write you a little note and she left it here. I have been keeping it for you."

He drew an envelope out of his pocket and handed it to me.

"Don't read it now," I heard him murmur, "you look so tired. Let me call Anita back. She has been your untiring nurse for the last few days."

"How long have I been here?" I gasped, my fingers clutching the envelope he had given me.

"A week," he said.

I gasped again.

"A week! Heavens!"

"Time is of no importance to the Spanish," he smiled.

He looked a little younger and less formidable when he smiled but I still didn't like him. I kept muttering the name 'Rose', hanging on to it as though it were a mascot which would protect me. *But from what?* I couldn't imagine. I appealed to Mark Jervis to tell me more. He talked a great deal but all I could gather was that a police car had brought me to this house. Mark, himself, as soon as he had learned that the injured girl in the Renault carried identification papers in her bag proving that she was Rune le Motte, had gone along with the police to collect me.

"It was a mercy you weren't killed. We wouldn't let you be taken to a hospital," he ended.

I managed to sit up. My head was throbbing again and my shoulder pained me.

"Where is this girl, Rose—Rosamund Lowe—who was with me? Let me see her, talk to her—"

"I am sorry," he said. "I tried to persuade her to come and visit you but she said that she was at the end of her journey.

She had spent her holiday in Palma—was just visiting an aunt in the Puerto—then was flying home. She will have gone by now."

I suddenly felt completely overcome. I had never experienced such a ghastly mixed-up feeling of bewilderment and isolation. And the girl who had been with me before that accident had left the island—Mark didn't know where she had gone or who she really was. *So I might never know who I was!*

"Don't worry. You are all right," said Mark.

"But I'm not," I protested.

Why was I so unbelieving of what he told me, I wondered wretchedly.

He showed me my passport. I stared at it. It might have been me—but I had even forgotten exactly what I looked like! The long fair hair was there and the description—height, colour of eyes, etc., and it was a British Passport—on the other hand Mark kept telling me that I had lived in Paris for some time. I struggled in my mind over the language question. Did I speak French? Not that I knew of. I certainly couldn't *think* in French. How bewildering it all was!

Mark seemed unconcerned.

"When we brought you up here on the stretcher I thought what lovely blonde hair you have. Just as in this passport photograph, although they never do you justice, do they? You have a smaller nose, really, when one sees you," he added with a little laugh.

He produced for me a smart white travelling coat with *Rue de la Paix* on the label. Also a black hide suit-case with the initials *R. le. M.* and a big, expensive-looking bag which contained, among other things, a letter from Mark Jervis

which appeared to have been sent to Paris, with instructions for the journey.

"Poor Rune," he said. "Surely you can't doubt your identity now? All your clothes have been unpacked by Anita and are in your cupboards. Don't you recognise what you are now wearing?"

I didn't. To the best of my knowledge I had never before seen the delicate filmy nightdress—oyster-grey transparent nylon appliquéd with pale pink satin; narrow satin straps over the shoulders. Across the foot of my bed lay a white brocaded-silk dressing-gown, narrow and buttoned up at the side like a Chinese housecoat. The clothes couldn't be mine, these beautiful expensive things, I thought dazedly and sat shivering like a sick monkey, staring at Mark Jervis. My sensation of loneliness changed to one of fear. Suddenly I said:

"Please go away—leave me alone."

He rose at once. He spoke politely—kindly:

"Of course, Rune. Please let Anita know when you would like me to come back."

I called after him:

"Try to find that other girl—try to find her! *I must see her.*"

He turned back at the door and smiled at me tolerantly as he would at a fractious child.

"I gave you a letter from Miss Lowe just now. It may tell you more than I can. You must read it."

The door closed behind him. The sweat poured down my face. My whole body felt drenched. I flung off the sheet and lay shivering, yet hot as though I had fever, the transparent nightgown clinging to me.

I opened Rosamund Lowe's letter. I neither recognised

writing not notepaper which I saw was headed *House of the Seventh Cross*. Mark had, of course, informed me that she had come here with me after the accident and written to me on borrowed paper. It said:

"*Dear Rune le Motte,*

Just to let you know that I shall be leaving the island in four days' time. It will be no use you looking for me, I don't know where I'll be. I'm a bit of a nomad. I am off to Paris then the Bahamas. I promise to get in touch with you when I get back. I can't tell you how glad I am we met. It was providential. I've been very worried about you but thank God I know now that you are in no danger of your life.

Till we meet again—keep smiling.

Rose Lowe."

I read this letter twice. It meant nothing. It couldn't have told anybody who read it anything. It just started "*Dear Rune le Motte*". They all kept telling me that I was Rune. My companion in the car had gone, leaving no address. *Rose Lowe*. Again that name stirred a chord in me—yet my memory failed to go further. I only knew that I didn't like being in this house—and that I was wretched. I folded the letter, telling myself that at least this girl, Rose had promised to come back and see me *one day*.

I must wait for that day. She might then revive my memory. She *must*!

Utterly bewildered, I began to cry again. Then I slept, thankful to forget my confusion and my nameless fears.

4

"I AM very pleased with you, senorita—you are much stronger and can get up for a while this afternoon. Very good, yes?"

I nodded. I had just been examined by the tall, stooping, bald-headed Spanish doctor from Pollensa. He spoke excellent English.

Hovering discreetly in the background was the housekeeper whom they called Renata. I had begun to dislike her almost as much as I did Mark Jervis. She had, unfortunately, replaced the little maid whom I had found so sympathetic and friendly. Nobody came into my room now except Mark, the doctor, or this woman. She was a tall, gaunt creature, black hair stretched back from her brow, and dark eyes so narrow, so slitty, that she looked to me almost like an Oriental. There was something sinister about Renata. Her skin was ivory-white instead of brown, like most of her kind, and with a faint growth of black moustache which made her look ugly and masculine. When she spoke, however, she had an extraordinarily soft, sibilant voice. She hissed rather than enunciated her words. She seemed to become feline—looked rather like an elongated cat, I thought.

I told Mark, yesterday, that I didn't like Renata. All he had said was that she was a splendid housekeeper, an equally good cook, and that she came originally from the Mexican Xueta population, who were all of Jewish stock, but strict

Catholics and disliked by the pure Mallorquins. I was to learn more about Renata at a later date, and I didn't particularly like what I heard. But Mark assured me she was an excellent person whom my Uncle Paul had trusted, and that her appearance belied her. She was really a treasure and quite gentle.

I couldn't believe it. But I didn't argue with Mark because I had already learned it wasn't much good. He always seemed to get the better of me; he would make adroit explanations to prove that I was wrong and he was right, and got away with them. I had to accept the attentions of Renata; she was obviously in this household to stay and it was not my business, although Mark kept hinting that one day it *would be*. I failed to understand this, but hadn't so far had an opportunity to probe more closely into such a statement.

I rather liked Dr. Fernandez—he was very nice and seemed genuinely concerned about my health. I had been here two weeks now. The head-bandages had been removed. Renata had been allowed to wash my hair. Everybody, including the gallant Spanish physician, admired it. He said that it looked like gold silk, spread over my pillow. I had to admit that Renata performed the task of brushing and caring for my hair well enough. Her fingers were smooth, and she had been gentle with the cut above my left ear. When I looked in the mirror I could see a bald patch where they had cut the hair away. But a thick strand hid the scar which was now rapidly healing. Dr. Fernandez said I had good healing flesh. My shoulder gave me only the odd twinge of pain.

"How soon can I travel?" I asked him.

"Travel?" he questioned, looking at me over his glasses.

"Yes—I want to go away—"

"Go where—?" he began.

At this juncture Mark Jervis knocked on the door and joined us. He had heard what I said and echoed the doctor's question:

"Go where? I don't suppose you will be able to travel for some time, even if the doctor gives you permission. Anyhow, where would you go, Rune? This is your home. Soon you will be able to get out for a change in your new car—yes, we have bought you another one to replace the wrecked Renault. I shall chauffeur you myself. I'll drive you down to the Puerto to get some sea air as soon as possible."

My heart began to beat violently as it always did when Mark looked at me and opposed my wishes.

"I want to go back to England—" I began, but stopped because the old confusion of thought arrested my ideas. I didn't know why I said *England*. Then Mark said gently:

"Poor Rune—you still can't remember—you lived in Paris!"

Dr. Fernandez interrupted, lifting a warning finger at Mark.

"Tush!—no forcing—let it all come back gradually."

Mark acknowledged this rebuke with a nod. Renata—who had been smiling (more than ever like a Chinese idol, I thought) walked out of the room with her cat-like tread. She never made a noise like Anita, who seemed a healthy, more normal little soul with her rope-soled *espadrilles* flapping against the tiled floors outside my door.

Dr. Fernandez bade me goodbye.

"Take your tonic, my child, and do not over-tax your strength. Only a little while up today, please. You will feel much stronger soon. You are in splendid condition really for one who came so near to death."

I lapsed into a rather sullen silence. I even told myself that I wished I had died in that crash. Mentally, I felt so *awful*.

Mark said:

"Do as the doctor orders, Rune, and take things quietly."

I nodded.

After Dr. Fernandez had gone, Mark walked to the window and opened the jalousies a little wider, letting in a flood of sunshine and a glimpse of wonderfully bright blue sky.

"I shall be glad when you can see our garden—and the view," he said.

"I wish I felt that I *belonged* here," I said in a voice as sullen as my mood.

"You will, in time."

"So you keep saying."

"You never told me," he said, "about Miss Lowe's letter. Did it help throw any more light on things for you?"

I pulled it from under my pillow, where I had been keeping it almost as a kind of mascot, and threw it rather ungraciously at Mark. He caught it, his lips twisting a little. He was always meticulously polite and deferential but sometimes, when I looked at his thinly-cut lips, I fancied he must be a hard man—even with a touch of cruelty. Yet I presumed he must have something nice about him for Paul le Motte to have liked him so much. I wished I knew everything about the House of the Seventh Cross. I could only look forward to a visit from Mr. le Motte's lawyer, Senor Iturrbo, whom he called the *abogado*. He was apparently coming to see me as soon as I could cope with legal matters. There were papers for me to sign—quite a number of formalities. Mark intimated that I might even recover my memory when I listened to the details of the Will since he

had already sent much of this information to Paris. I thought it peculiar and frightening that I couldn't remember one single thing about my life in Paris, or my own father who had been old Paul le Motte's young brother.

Mark read the letter and handed it back to me.

"There you are! Rose confirms what I keep telling you. You *are* Rune le Motte. And you were on your way from Paris to Pollensa. Who should know better than Miss Lowe? When I last saw her, she went back to Palma. She seemed rather neurotic and a bit of a mystery. But I don't, in fact, think she was of much importance. I confess she was very good-looking; might have been your sister. But she had rather a poor complexion whereas yours is exquisite," Mark bowed ceremoniously, "If you don't mind me saying so, Rune."

I did mind but I felt too tired to care. All I wanted was to sleep again. I seemed to spend a lot of time sleeping.

When I woke again Renata was beside me with my lunch-tray—as usual, a perfectly-cooked meal. A ripe Spanish melon, a veal dish with cream sauce, followed by fresh fruit, cheese and crisp rolls. As always there was a carafe of wine —red or white, whichever I preferred. As a rule I declined to drink anything but fresh lemonade.

The tall, gaunt Spanish woman gave me her sinister, narrowed smile.

"I am glad the senorita is so much better."

She spoke fluent English, with a strong accent.

"Yes, thank you, I am better," I nodded.

"Would you care to put on your dressing-gown and walk a little on my arm, senorita?"

"I'll get up but I don't want any help. I can find my own way around, I am sure," I said, but almost immediately felt

remorseful. I seemed to be so short-tempered with everybody. I suppose it was the shock of my accident. I couldn't in my heart believe that I was normally so abrupt and ungrateful for the kindness and attention everyone was showing me.

Renata didn't seem to mind. She continued to grin.

"Just as the senorita wishes. She can sit on her balcony or better still, on the terrace below where there is an awning to shield her from the sun, and a chaise-longue. She can lie there on her cushions and see the beautiful mountains and the sea."

I tried to climb out of my depression. I thanked Renata, and said I would like to bath and dress. With scrupulous attention she laid out my dressing-gown and a pair of white, silver-embroidered slippers.

"Please ring your bell if you need my help, senorita."

"Thank you."

"I will inform Senor Jervis of your intention to go downstairs."

"I would rather you didn't," I said sharply. "In fact I definitely do not wish you to say anything to Mr. Jervis. After lunch you all take a siesta. But I have had enough rest. I will choose that time when it is quiet to stroll around the house. I do not wish to be accompanied by anybody. You understand, Renata, *anybody*."

I thought I saw the smile fade from her lips, leaving a very sour expression, but only for a fleeting second. Then the cat-like grin returned.

"*Muy bien*, senorita," she said.

It was at that moment that I heard the sound of music. Distant but plain. A piano, being marvellously played. Only for a few moments was I puzzled as to what I heard and why

I liked it so much. Then something like a light really did pierce the darkness of my mind. Just in one illuminating flash. *I loved music and I knew what was being played.* I recognised every note of it. It was the melancholy but beautiful theme by the great Spanish composer, Granados. *La Maja y El Ruisenor* (in English, *The Lover And The Nightingale.*)

It filled me with pleasure and brought the colour to my cheeks. I called Renata back.

"Where is that music coming from? Who is playing the piano?"

I fancied a rather crafty expression crossed the parchment-like face. Then Renata shrugged:

"I hear no music, senorita."

That made me angry.

"You do, you *must* hear it. Listen."

She stood attentively with a hand behind her ear but shook her head.

"I hear nothing, senorita."

The music continued—rising to the familiar, impassioned, glorious crescendo of love and longing. That symbol of the sweet-throated nightingale, breaking his heart for love. Oh, how often I, myself, had played it on my piano. On my gramophone, too. I had a lovely record of Victoria de Los Angeles singing it.

I remembered perfectly!

I sat bolt upright and spoke with sudden excitement: "I can play this song. Listen. The piano is in this house."

Renata stared at me blankly, and shook her head.

But where, where, *when*, did I play? I asked myself in a daze. The details remained obscure. This music was a flash of light but the rest remained impenetrably dark, belonging to that mysterious past which seemed to have rolled away

from me as though it never existed, leaving me in an equally mysterious present.

"I am sorry, senorita, but I hear nothing," said Renata blandly and went away.

I put my arms over my hunched knees and continued to listen. Whoever it was, he or she played the piano with a great deal of feeling. I was entranced. Or was it only a record which I could hear in the distance, from outside this house?

I got up. My head swam for a moment. I staggered, then grew steadier and put on my dressing-gown. I moved to the shutters and flung them wide open. As I did so the sound of the music ceased abruptly as though the pianist had been interrupted. Greatly to my regret, I heard not another sound.

Now I searched for and found some dark glasses in a drawer of the dressing-chest. I put them on and walking on to my balcony, leaned over the wrought-iron balustrade, shading my eyes with one hand and looking around me.

I had to admit that what I saw brought a little cry of admiration from my lips. It was truly magnificent. Below me lay a beautiful garden and a tiled terrace, with a carved stone balustrade. A large pepper tree threw a pleasant shade from its drooping silver-green leaves over two blue-cushioned, long cane chairs. Huge stone tubs cascading with scarlet and pink geraniums stood in rows along the top of the balcony. Tall Spanish-glazed pottery urns, turquoise blue, were placed at regular intervals—full of gay orange-coloured flowers that I could not put a name to. The tall wrought-iron gate was shut. Across the top in a semi-circle of gilded iron letters was the name of this fabulous home—*House of the Seventh Cross*.

Through slender pine trees and sword-sharp cactus

bushes, rich with their orange-coloured fruit, I could see yet another little paved courtyard where there were wrought-iron white painted tables, and chairs with turquoise and orange cushions. And one long teak-wood dining-table with monks' benches on either side. Obviously somebody had just finished lunch there—Mark Jervis perhaps—for I could see the checked cloth, a half-finished bottle of wine, an empty glass, a broken loaf of bread and a bowl of fruit and nuts.

To my left, the garden sloped down toward a rough roadway. Further to the left, this road took a hairpin bend and presumably continued like that for some miles down into the valley where it reached the village of Pollensa.

I could just catch a glimpse of the terra-cotta tiled roofs of the little Spanish cottages, the tall tower of a big church, and one dominating building of terra-cotta stone. This looked to me like a monastery. I learned later that it was.

Far beyond, stretched the purple rim of the marvellous mountains which I came to love, even when all else seemed sad and desperate. They were magnificent—savage—brilliantly etched against the hard blue of the Spanish sky.

The heat was intense, but I found it agreeable. I stretched my arms and drew in a breath of the air. It seemed to me full of the perfume of almonds.

Here and there I could see a curve of coast-line, the sea an even darker blue than the sky. How beautiful it all was, and how peaceful! Yet real peace seemed out of my grasp.

My senses began to reel with all this loveliness—rather terrifying and new to me. I felt quite sure that I had never seen anything like *this* before, whatever had happened to my memory.

The House of the Seventh Cross appeared to be the largest and most magnificent of them all on this sacred route they

called the Calvario. The roof-top of one grey stone cottage was just visible through the dark green trees on my left. Each house appeared to be marked by one stark stone cross. I was to become familiar with these tall crosses all along the Calvario. They were fascinating and slightly melancholy.

Now I saw a car climbing toward the Seventh Cross, and heard the blare of a Klaxon horn. The mysterious languor of ancient religious devotional rites seemed to vie with the noise and fast tempo of modern life. It was all very intriguing, I thought, even if it puzzled me.

The car reached the Seventh Cross and passed the gateway just below my balcony. I wished it had stopped, and that I could have spoken to the driver—whoever it was—anyone rather than Mark Jervis. Apart from the staff and the doctor, Mark was the only person I seemed to know in Pollensa and he was still a complete stranger. I felt desperately lonely.

I must get better, I thought. I must regain my strength and be able to get right away. I must try to sort myself out.

I wished I could hear that piano again. I remembered with a touch of anger how that creature, Renata, had insisted that she had not heard a sound. I began to feel that she had told a deliberate lie.

But why? Why?

Why—to so many things. Endless questions, with my mind still blurred.

That wretched Renata had been all too right when she said that I would need an arm. Rather shakily, I managed to get into the bath—it was a lovely rose-pink bathroom with exotic black bath and basin and many mirrors. I began to wonder what sort of recluse old Uncle Paul le Motte had been. It wasn't at all the sort of place one would imagine an

elderly hermit had either decorated or approved. But this was all explained to me in time.

Meanwhile I got no further than my bath, because as I stepped out and dried myself on a huge fleecy towel (all the fine linen was embroidered with *P. le M.*)—I felt dizzy. The dizziness persisted and the pain in my head returned so I reluctantly went back to bed. When Renata came in with my tea she gave me a smug smile and murmured that she hoped that I had enjoyed my tour of the house. I fancy we looked at each other malevolently. I snapped:

"I decided not to make what you call a 'tour' today. I shall make it tomorrow."

"As the senorita wishes," she said in that ghastly hissing voice of hers. I don't know when any woman filled me with more revulsion than the cook-housekeeper of the House of the Seventh Cross.

I felt better again once darkness fell. I stood in my dressing-gown at the open windows—for it was still warm and still—and I looked with admiration at the unearthly beauty of the Majorcan night. A sky full of stars that seemed bigger than any I had ever seen before. The dark billowing clouds of the night were rolling away from the mountain tops. A purple mist shadowed the valley although I could just see a few twinkling lights in the village, miles below. And occasionally I could hear a car changing gear as it ascended the steep hairpin bends up the Calvario.

Once again I wished that one of these cars would stop, and that somebody would come in and talk to me and make me feel that I was *real*. Since I had first opened my eyes and found myself in this house I had felt almost disembodied, frighteningly remote from what I am sure was my real self.

5

NEXT morning, feeling physically stronger, I got up and dressed. In the wardrobe, among dozens of dresses, I found a very attractive sleeveless one of fine pale-blue cotton with a pattern of black flowers. It had a Paris label in it. I also found sets of exquisite nylon or chiffon lingerie in the drawers of the big chest, and a variety of smart shoes and sandals. I must say everything fitted me perfectly. I looked smart and quite attractive when my toilette was completed. I couldn't help but believe all these things had been made especially for me. All the lingerie was embroidered with the initials *R. le M.*

The hateful Renata seemed to be busy in her quarters and not around to interfere. I opened my door and called to Anita. With skirts tucked up and a mop in hand, the little Mallorquin was polishing the beautiful floor of the tesselated corridor. When she saw me she called out:

"*Buenos dias*, senorita. Is better?"

"Much better," I nodded. "Come here a moment, Anita."

Her smile vanished. She looked nervously toward the staircase. It was a beautiful structure curving down to the lower hall. The wrought-iron struts were marvellously decorated and gilded. They were very good at this sort of work in Majorca and, of course, in Spain generally. The railing was of polished Spanish mahogany. All the way along the wall as far as I could see hung gold-framed portraits—I presume of the le Motte family of the past. For these were decidedly more French in style than Spanish.

"No is permit in senorita's room—" began the little maid, but I wasn't having this. I took the mop out of Anita's hand and forcibly led her into my room.

"Now," I said, "to begin with—why aren't you allowed in my room any more? You used to look after me, didn't you?"

She eyed me warily and began to back away toward the door.

"Renata look after you now. Anita no permit."

I felt my face grow hot with annoyance.

"*Why not?*"

She shook her head. Her nervousness seemed to increase. She said:

"Must work, please, senorita, or lose job."

"Who cares?" I exclaimed. "You aren't a slave. Even in Majorca surely you girls are modern and can come and go as you please? If you are dismissed there must be dozens of other people in Pollensa who'd be glad to engage you."

I don't think she understood my rapid English. She just gave me a smile and shrugged.

"Anita," I said, "*what's going on in this house?*"

Again the shrug and the look of anxiety. She stuttered:

"The senorita *invalida*—must keep quiet—"

I sprang up and took her to my mirror. I pointed to my reflection. It showed us a tall girl in a blue dress with tumbled wheat-fair hair, hollows in her rather pale cheeks and throat, and big blue eyes. A girl who had been ill; but her shoulders were squared and her chin held high, and her lips bore a look of determination.

"*Invalida*—rubbish, Anita. Do I look like an invalid? Or is it that everybody just thinks I'm round the bend?"

No answer from Anita. Her round black eyes goggled at me.

"Yes, that's it," I went on heatedly. "You all think I'm batty . . ." I tapped my forehead, "just because I've lost my memory. Isn't that it?"

I honestly don't think the poor child understood, and that her only wish was to keep her job. I found out later that although the House of the Seventh Cross had a somewhat odd and even sinister reputation, Mr. le Motte had been respected in Pollensa. And because he was so rich, he was never short of willing workers from the village. Whatever Anita had been told about Mr. le Motte's niece, she obviously did not wish to offend the housekeeper. So she turned and ran out of my room.

I felt cross and puzzled. I was fully determined to get going under my own steam and make my tour of inspection alone. I wanted too, to try to revive a few memories of my past—my own home. That above all things. It was positively grim, groping in such a mental fog, and unfortunate, to say the least of it, to find the atmosphere in this house one that I neither recognised nor liked.

A little later that same day I had a long talk with Mark Jervis. I never did take that walk alone through my uncle's home. Mark suddenly appeared in the hall, walking with that rather stealthy tread of his. Like everybody else he wore rope-soled *espadrilles*. I was halfway down the beautiful staircase. He came up to meet me and offered a hand.

"You don't look too steady, Rune. Take my arm."

I started to protest but he came quietly to my side. So, leaning on him with one hand and clutching the banisters with the other, I made it down to the entrance hall. I wished this beastly giddiness would not persist, but of course the

doctor had warned me that after a nasty go of concussion I was liable to feel giddy for a bit.

And after all, I thought, I had no reason to be so antagonistic toward Mark. He was very polite and anxious to please me. I also had to remember that he had been Uncle Paul's most trusted employee—almost like an adopted son.

My head cleared. I began to enjoy looking through the house. It was all new and quite wonderful. The old part was unique. When my Uncle Paul bought the property twelve years ago (so Mark informed me), it had consisted only of the two round stone watch-towers, one of which a clever architect had incorporated in the new building. From the outside the house had a mediaeval air, because a lot of the really old Majorcan stone had been used. The whole place now resembled a small castle. The second watch-tower was approached through a narrow corridor leading from the main house. Once there one could climb up a winding stone staircase which curled round and round until one reached a flat roof. It had a glass verandah and—Mark told me—one of the most magnificent views in the Calvario. One could see mountains and coast for miles around.

When Uncle Paul was younger and stronger, he used, apparently, to go up there and study the stars. He had been something of an astronomer in his day. He was more of the intellectual type than my father who (so Mark informed me) had been a banker in Paris. But I just did not remember one single thing about either of my parents, and every time Mark called me 'Rune' it worried me. Yet I knew that name. I found it odd and intriguing.

I was shown Uncle Paul's study, approached through a white archway from the main hall. There I saw hundreds of leather-bound books and a fine collection of bronzes. The

big desk remained as he had left it, with his blotter, and a huge silver inkpot (Mark said my uncle never used modern ballpoints but always wrote with a quill). A number of papers and letters were stuffed in big Spanish leather holders —dark olive-green with gold tooling—like the rest of the desk perquisites. Typically handsome Spanish work.

There was a covered typewriter on a small desk on one side of the room which Mark said was his. He then (rather naïvely, I thought) showed me a cupboard full of bottles, decanters, fine-cut glass, and cigars. These, and the wine cellar and the entire library, apparently had been left to Mark in Uncle Paul's Will. (That Will which I still had to see!)

"How nice for you," I said. I could not keep the coldness out of my voice. Somehow those large grey eyes of Mark's behind their glasses seemed so icy and so calculating, I could not feel warmly toward him. He said: "But you won't want to be bothered about Wills and bequests just now."

I disagreed.

"I think it's time I knew *exactly* how I stand and what it's all about—" I began.

He interrupted, leading me out of the study.

"All in good time when you are fitter, Rune. Now come and see the rest of the house before you get too tired."

So I held my peace and let him show me the salon, the big reception room which was kept shuttered and smelt, I thought, a bit stuffy. I decided that it was all very mysterious. Surely some woman had chosen the décor, and furnishing in here. It was not a man's room. It was more modern than the others. About forty-foot long, there was at one end the rounded turret similar to that in my bedroom overhead. It was fitted with window-seats, opposite which stood a huge

plate-glass table, ready for entertaining; flowers, cigarettes, ash-trays, and a tall silver and pigskin lighter.

The magnificent fireplace was of carved Spanish wood which had been pickled. The same light wood panelling ran round the whole salon. The walls, higher up, were papered with great taste in a delicate shade of coral like the beautiful silk curtains. Opposite the fireplace three tall windows led on to the terrace with the green trees and flower-filled urns and pots that I had already admired from my balcony. These windows were all open but the jalousies were shut to keep out the fierce midday sun.

Through the rest of the house I saw further evidence of the feminine touch. The floors were polished—half-covered by a variety of Persian rugs. But the salon was carpeted in black. Two huge chesterfields facing each other were covered with damask of the beautiful coral shade matching the curtains. Very effective, I thought, with that black carpet.

There were two exotic, vivid paintings, properly lighted, and signed, so Mark told me, by both the artists who came from Palma.

Uncle Paul used to encourage local art. These pictures had been hung last year at the Festival of Pollensa which took place every autumn in the Cloisters of the Convent adjoining Pollensa. At these times concerts were held actually inside the church if the weather was bad. If I appreciated music, Mark said, I could enjoy the Festival later on this year. A variety of first-class artists often came from Brussels or Paris: such as Martha Argerich, the great pianist who had played here, and that great violinist, Eugen Prokop, who, at one time, actually lived here in a house on the Calvario.

"Despite the fact that we are a village, you see we are very up and coming," murmured Mark. "You will not be bored in Pollensa."

I listened to all this with some interest but a great deal of confusion. The world Mark was opening up for me certainly seemed entertaining but in a flat unhappy sort of way it meant little to me; I felt that I didn't belong to it any more than I belonged to this house which he kept alluding to as *my* home.

At the mention of the music however, I said:

"I can at least remember one thing. I love music and I think I can play the piano."

Mark smiled at me as he would have done at somebody younger and more ignorant than himself. A maddeningly superior smile.

"Splendid! Something you didn't tell us when you first wrote about yourself from Paris. Uncle Paul would have been interested. He liked music. Maybe it's in the blood."

"Maybe," I said, frowning.

"Did you notice the piano in the salon?" he went on. "You must play it some time."

I had noticed it. A big black Steinway.

"It's an old instrument," Mark said, "but still very fine. It was shipped from France by Uncle Paul when he first settled in Majorca."

Suddenly I remembered the music I had heard.

"Somebody was playing that piano yesterday," I exclaimed. "*Now* I understand. It *was* somebody in this house—I heard the Steinway."

I saw a look of anger and consternation suddenly break the cold mask of Mark Jervis's face. But only for a second, then he smiled again.

"Oh, I think not. The piano hasn't been opened since the tuner came from Palma last January. He only comes twice a year."

I was annoyed.

"This is quite ridiculous. I heard it quite plainly. The piano was being *beautifully* played. Renata said she didn't hear it but *I know she did*. Perhaps somebody was playing it who shouldn't, but it *was* being played and I can tell you all about it. It was one of my favourite pieces—*The Lover And The Nightingale* by Granados. I refuse to admit it was just a hallucination on my part."

Mark's eyes narrowed. Then he raised his brows and said:

"Well, don't let's worry too much just now. You may have heard an echo of a gramophone record coming from one of the houses on the Calvario. At times on a still, hot day you can hear the strangest sounds coming up from the valley."

My cheeks felt hot. My heart beat fast and resentfully.

"I refuse to believe that. It was a piano being played in this house, very distinctly," I said stubbornly.

"Now don't upset yourself, dear Rune. It isn't good for you."

I turned on him furiously.

"You're behaving like Renata or the little maid, oh, yes! —everyone—all of you are humouring me—trying to pretend that I'm crazy just because I've lost my memory. I won't have it. I'm absolutely fed up. I'm going to pack and leave this house at once. I don't belong here. I know that I don't."

"Oh, Rune!" said Mark sadly, "you'll be ill again if you allow yourself to get so upset. Where could you go, my dear, if you left the Calvario? Your home is here. You've come to

live with us. When you're better I'll show you all your own letters and—"

I began to feel hysterical. I shouted at him:

"Show them to me *now*. Prove to me that I'm Rune le Motte. Because I don't believe it. Or that I have anything to do with this Uncle Paul or—"

"Rune, Rune," I heard Mark's voice repeating.

Then, I regret to say, as he caught hold of me and lifted me off my feet the wretched giddiness overtook me again, and I fainted.

6

WHEN I woke up I found myself back in my bed. I felt frustrated and disappointed. I thought it was high time I conquered my physical weakness. I had lunch in bed to satisfy Mark and Renata—both of them such bullies! But I got up directly afterwards. These Majorcan residents could take their siestas, like the natives, I decided, but I had had enough of my pillow. I put on the black-flowered dress again and taking my sun-glasses, went downstairs. This time, thank goodness, I didn't meet Mark.

I slipped out of the house.

All was peaceful on this hot drowsy afternoon and very quiet. I could hear nothing but the yapping of a dog down in the valley. I discovered later on that there were an incredible number of stray animals on the island—for the most part thin, hungry, miserable-looking dogs or cats that wrung my heart. While I lay in bed, I had heard the faint howling and barking—almost a continuous reproach to the cruelty of man.

I began to enjoy the stroll in the glorious warmth of the sun. Wherever I went, I seemed to look down upon a fresh vista of dazzling loveliness. Truly Majorca was a magical island. I wondered if I had ever been here before. *Did* I belong to Paris or London?

What was I *doing* before I took that flight to Palma and got into what they called 'my Renault' on that fatal day? It was only a fortnight ago but I felt that it had all taken place

in a past life. Certainly it had no relation to the present.

It was obvious that Uncle Paul had been fond of his garden. On either side of the paved terrace with all the gay tubs there were odd-looking Spanish trees and great banks of flowering cactus. There were also one or two dark tall firs and the young green almonds and dusty grey olives which I seemed to recognise. But on the whole it was all strange to me.

When I turned round the side of the disused watch-tower, I found myself in a totally English garden which was a charming surprise. The well-laid-out rose-beds were full of colour. The bushes were in full bloom. I did not know much about the names of the flowers but I felt I must always have loved roses. I was filled with admiration for each bed with its particular pattern of selected colour, ranging from deepest crimson to palest pink, and creamy white. Unfortunately, although it was shaded here by cunningly-planted trees, the intense heat was already ruining the blooms. Even as I watched, hundreds of petals fluttered to the hot, caked earth. Tonight a Majorcan gardener would set the whirling garden spray in motion and save the buds, and the green grass lawn. But Majorca in the summer suffered from lack of water.

Suddenly I thought:

Roses are essentially English. *I know England.* I'll bet anything in the world that there is no French blood in me.

Sighing, I turned and walked through the wrought-iron gateway down two stone steps and on to the road. I only managed a few hundred yards down the steep descent. Back came the slight sensation of giddiness. But I set my teeth and struggled against it. I wasn't going to let them find me in a

huddled heap and watch my future movements even more closely. Freedom of action had become of the greatest importance to me.

I stood still, pressing my hand to my temples. At least I found I had come as far as another cross—near a tiny white-washed cottage with a charming blue tiled roof. A ginger cat sat on the doorstep. Two chickens scratched in the dust. Vermilion-coloured bougainvillaea rioted over the sunlit walls. It was an enchanting little place and belonged, no doubt, to one of the islanders. During one of my talks with Mark, he had told me that there were no neighbours of importance near the House of the Seventh Cross. There was a considerable space between all the tall stone crosses. Whoever lived in this tiny house must be the first of the neighbours.

I stood there, pressing my finger-tips against my forehead, willing myself not to pass out again; then suddenly an astonishing thing happened. Enough to restore my equilibrium. Through the closed shutters of that cottage window came the sound of a piano being played. *That* tune again! The haunting, captivating beauty of *The Lover And The Nightingale*.

This, then, was what I had heard and which both Mark and Renata had discredited. And it could be no ordinary villager who owned this place. The pianist was of the first order.

Something compelled me to walk to the door and knock upon it. I didn't know who I would find or even if I would be welcome. But I had to find out more about this mysterious pianist.

The music stopped. The door opened and out came a young man—extremely tall and extremely handsome, with

a gaunt, spare frame, rather square shoulders and very lean hips. His hair, copper brown and a little on the long side, waved crisply back from a broad, intelligent forehead. His eyes were a bright, clear hazel. The only thing that spoiled his looks was his thin, bitter mouth—and a rather forbidding expression. He did not have a welcoming smile for me. I began to regret knocking on that door.

I could not judge his nationality but certainly he was not one of the 'locals', I thought darkly, though his face, neck and bare arms had been burned by the sun. His bare feet were in the customary *espadrilles*. The coarse, blue, faded fisherman's jeans might well have belonged to a peasant but not that beautifully-cut shirt. Something about it rang a bell with me. It was an English sports shirt with a little embroidered crest over the pocket. Then I recognised the crest. This was one of Fred Perry's famous sports-shirts. *I used to wear one myself when I played tennis at my local club. What club? Where?*

All became pain and confusion in my mind again and I think I must have looked pretty queer because the tall young man reached out a hand and caught me by the arm.

"Are you all right?"

I thought that it was just me—that I was past hearing properly for his voice reached me as a hoarse whisper. I tried to laugh and nodded drunkenly.

"You don't look very good," he croaked in the same barely distinguishable voice. "You'd better come in a moment and rest."

And he pulled me out of the sunshine into the shade and coolness of the smallest cottage I have ever seen. He more or less picked me up in his arms and placed me in the one easy-chair in the room. As my head cleared I looked around

and saw that this was the one and only room downstairs. It contained just a few pieces of fruit-wood furniture; strong but primitive; locally made, I was sure—two rush-seated chairs, and a small stout table. There was no fireplace and only one small window. A steep staircase led up from the far end, to what I presumed must be the only bedroom overhead. Through a typically Spanish archway I could see an apology for a kitchen.

The tall young man was English—that had been made evident. And he didn't seem pleased to have a visitor, but he brought me a glass of wine. Rather cheap strong local stuff which made me cough as I sipped it.

"I must apologise. It isn't the best," he said and his laugh was as harsh and low as his voice.

Was I still unable to hear well or was he *whispering*, if so why, I asked myself.

"Thank you," I said aloud, "I'm all right now. I can go."

"Don't hurry. You were on the point of fainting."

"I—I am sorry for troubling you," I stammered.

"Not at all. The sun's very hot today. You aren't used to it. You're Mr. le Motte's niece, aren't you? I heard, of course, that you had arrived. Allow me to introduce myself —my name is Julian Marsh."

I began to feel slightly panic-stricken. Surely my hearing wasn't *going*? I could hardly hear him. Then I think he read my expression because his thin bitter mouth took an even more bitter curve. He smiled. A desolate smile.

"Okay! Okay! Your ears are not at fault. It's me. I can't talk any louder. I apologise. It must be bloody awful trying to hear me."

I was relieved to hear the good, round British oath. And

when he smiled the young man certainly looked quite attractive. I presumed he must either have a ghastly cold or some affection of the throat. Soon, feeling restored by the wine, I stared round the room. I looked for the piano that wasn't there, but I saw a small portable record player. So that was it! It had been my record I had heard—the one I knew so well. I said:

"Now I understand. My beloved Granados. You were playing it yesterday. I heard it. They told me I didn't. But I did."

"It was not the *record* you heard yesterday," he corrected me. "It was me playing the Steinway in the House of the Seventh Cross. Which, I hasten to add, I am now strictly forbidden to do!"

"Forbidden?" I repeated, staring at him.

He gave his bitter laugh, took a small bag of tobacco and a cigarette paper and began to roll himself a cigarette. Fascinated I watched the dexterous way he did this with his fine, brown fingers. I always notice men's nails. I hated dirty ones. But this man's were clean, though the second and third fingers of the right hand were somewhat stained with nicotine. He must be a compulsive smoker.

"I don't think I had better offer you one of my cigarettes," he said. "They're stronger than that damned wine."

"I beg your pardon?"

"If you didn't hear me, leave it," he said rather rudely.

I felt hot and embarrassed. The look of frustration and misery on that handsome face bewildered me, I found it quite upsetting. I muttered:

"I hear you perfectly well."

"Then you're one in a thousand." He gave his hoarse, low laugh and turned away.

He walked to the gramophone and lifted off the record. Turning, he whispered:

"Yes, I was playing the Steinway. It's a grand old piano. But perhaps you'll oblige by not telling your uncle's charming secretary who hates me and my music like poison."

"Of course I won't, but I don't understand—why shouldn't you play Uncle Paul's piano? You must have known him."

"I knew him very well and I liked the old boy although he was in some ways a mean and difficult character. But he had his generous moments and he was very good to me. I miss him, I assure you, particularly the fact that I am no longer *persona grata* in his house."

"But you must be—I shall see that you are again!" I exclaimed, suddenly and for the first time conscious that I had some powers—some rights—if indeed I was my uncle's heiress and future owner of that house up the road.

The young man stood in front of me a moment, his arms crossed, his brilliant, melancholy eyes staring down at me as though I was something of a curiosity.

"Very civil of you," came his hoarse whisper, "but I have yet to find anybody who can get the better of Mr. Mark Jervis when he *wants* to be unpleasant. I wonder if even you, attractive as you are, my dear Miss le Motte, will achieve *that*."

I felt annoyed, unreasonably so, perhaps, and answered coolly.

"I don't really know what you are talking about, but I don't intend to be dictated to by Mr. Jervis—or anybody else."

Julian Marsh took his cigarette from his lips and grinned in a way that made his lean, bitter face look much younger.

"I used to think just like that. You remind me painfully of myself—as I *used* to be."

"And now?" I asked, wondering what he meant.

"Now I realise that what I intend, or do not intend, has little bearing on what happens if fate chooses to put on the thumbscrews. And of course you will have heard that splendid saying: the way to hell is paved with good intentions."

I relented still further. It seemed to me very sad that a man with his potentialities and looks should have become so bitter and melancholy. Especially a musician able to play the piano as I had heard Julian Marsh play it. What could have happened to him?

"I think I *have* heard that saying before," I said, "but I refuse to be depressed by it. One must at least go on *intending* to do what one thinks best, or it'll be hell anyhow."

Now Julian Marsh sat down on the wooden chair opposite me and folded his bare, brown arms, cigarette between his lips. Through the smoke he gazed at me reflectively.

"Pollensa is buzzing with stories about the beautiful blonde who nearly lost her life on the Palma road. You should drive more carefully. Let that be one of *your* good intentions, senorita."

"I don't need a lecture from you!" I flared up again.

"Sorry—" He bowed in an exaggerated way.

I did not remember one thing about driving that car but I was sure that if I was this moment put at the steering wheel of one, I would be unable to drive it. That was an extraordinary thing. *I just didn't believe that I could drive.*

This queer Englishman, making cynical remarks in that hoarse, whispering voice of his began to depress me.

"I think it's time I left—" I started.

At once he looked apologetic and broke in:

"Don't go yet—please. I'm sorry if I've been disagreeable. If you want to know the truth, I find it refreshing to have a girl like you to talk to. I have few friends in Pollensa. I don't make them. A lot of people have been kind and hospitable, but I shun society. It maddens me when I always have to explain about my voice. Some people even start shouting at me as though I was deaf instead of dumb! It all gets me down. Do you realise I was once training for opera—that I once understudied Scapia, for *Tosca*?"

He couldn't have said anything more calculated to rouse my interest and pity although I don't really think he was asking for pity—only understanding. I settled back in my armchair again and sipped the rest of the wine in my glass. I had a sudden flash of memory connected with my past.

"*Tosca* is my favourite Puccini opera," I told him, "I was taken to hear Maria Callas sing in it with Tito Gobbi when it was produced at Covent Garden about two years ago. Gobbi makes the best Scapia ever."

"He was my idol—still is." Julian's face had changed—grown warm. His sad whisper was full of feeling. Now he started to discuss Tosca and the quality of Gobbi's voice, and the wonderful drama of what he, too, called the *best* of Puccini's operas. He had heard the Callas production. He had broken away from his own studies—he was at that time in Florence—and flown to London especially to hear the London production. He, Julian, once understudied a 'star' in a minor production of *Tosca* up in the Midlands. It had been memorable for him, he said, because for one night the 'star' succumbed to an attack of laryngitis and Julian had taken his place and sung Scapia. He had felt the power and

the glory of his own voice. There had been good notices to encourage him.

Silently I listened while Julian poured out the story of his early training, and early successes. Inevitably I asked what had happened to put an end to the career which had only just been beginning.

"If you don't mind telling me," I said gently.

"Not a bit. If it doesn't bore you to listen. But I seem to be talking about myself entirely. I want to hear about you."

"Later," I said.

"Queer thing," he went on, "both of us seem to be the victims of an accident, although yours doesn't seem to have done any permanent damage, for which let us all praise God. But my praise is muted."

Poor Julian. He didn't seem to be able to open his mouth without passing some acid comment but I found myself listening with deep interest to his story. At times his voice was so low I could hardly catch the words. I had to piece the story together in my own mind. It was a strain but I didn't want to keep asking '*What did you say?*' It was too embarrassing for him. So I was pleased when he broke off—gave me a sudden flashing smile—which transformed him entirely, and made me realise how shatteringly attractive he must once have been, and said:

"You have marvellous hearing—everybody else seems so deaf to me these days. You can hear what I say. It's a tremendous relief."

I smiled back, nodding. For the first time we had established a contact—seemed to meet on the same wave-length. He talked on. His father—a Londoner—had been killed in the last year of the War. Julian had never really known him. He was only five at the time. His chief memories were of

endless photographs, continually shown him by his mother and one big one that hung over his bed. Group-Captain Marsh in Air Force uniform, looking very like himself, Julian, at this age.

His mother was a Welsh woman—born in Pwllheli. Julian's early days had been spent on a farm in Efailnewydd to which his mother had returned once Group-Captain Marsh was brought down by a German fighter. From his earliest years Julian showed an aptitude for and a love of music, and had an exceptionally fine voice. As so often in Wales, this had all been encouraged by amateurs and professionals alike. His mother, Julian said with obvious tenderness, had sacrificed herself to give him the best musical training once he left the Grammar School in Pwllheli. She had little but her pension and the money left her by her father who had nothing much to leave. She had spent it entirely on her son's training. First in London, at the Trinity College—later in Florence where he had been sponsored by a famous Italian professor of singing who told him that he had a great future, what with his looks and his superb baritone voice.

In the summer of two years ago he had come out here to Majorca to rest from his studies, and have a holiday in the sun. This tiny cottage was usually let furnished in the season, so Julian had taken it. He was sick of people and wanted to live alone, and be quiet; and particularly to enjoy the swimming and water-skiing.

"I must tell you," Julian added, locking his fingers together and leaning forward, "that I was then alone in the world. My mother had just died. She was a lovely person. She adored my father and she gave the rest of her life to me. She was so proud because she thought in time I would be a

great opera singer. It's as well she didn't live to see the twilight of her god!"

"What happened?" I asked.

I was fascinated. I began to see so plainly the pattern of this young man's past; his devoted mother sacrificing everything for her gifted son. The young Julian growing up in the beauty of the Welsh valleys, and the grandeur of Snowdon; among the simple musical Welsh people. I could feel the warmth of his ambition and the driving work which he had enjoyed, hoping that it would take him to the top.

And then, he said, he had met my Uncle Paul.

Soon I began to see my uncle as he used to be. A queer character, it seemed, full of contradictions. As Julian had already said—he was either as mean as a miser or generous to excess. A hermit at heart, shunning society but lording it over his own little domain in quite a princely fashion. He had built up a kingdom in the House of the Seventh Cross, and both improved and beautified it.

"It's obvious," I broke in here, "that he appreciated art. Mark Jervis has shown me every evidence of that in the house. He seems to have patronised all the young local painters and writers."

"And singers," added Julian, "because the moment he learned who I was, he sent a message, inviting me to go in and see him, and play his piano. He seemed to enjoy this. To please the old man, one night, I sang some German *Lieder*. He seemed delighted. It was his compliments that caused the trouble with Mark Jervis. I could see that Jervis liked to think of himself as a sort of privileged personal assistant cum-adopted son. He had a hand in all Mr. le Motte's affairs. Gradually as the old man weakened in health, Mark took over the financial and domestic reins—running the place

much as he wanted, and at a rough guess I should say he also began to control Mr. le Motte."

"I don't like him," I said involuntarily.

"Nor I," said Julian with feeling.

He told me more.

7

On that fatal Sunday afternoon Julian was working in the old man's garden. He shared Uncle Paul's passion for roses. Julian had helped reconstruct the garden and make the English lawn, which had been beyond the Spanish gardener. He had also been enormously interested in the final modernisation of the watch-tower. They had workmen on the site and scaffolding up at this time. Julian had given Mr. le Motte one or two good ideas for a glassed-in verandah from which the old man could study his stars, in both winter and summer.

Mark Jervis bitterly resented Julian's constant intrusion into the House of the Seventh Cross. Julian said that he had never been more than civil to him and that only because he dared not be otherwise in front of his employer.

On this particular afternoon, Julian was nailing up a vine that had been torn from the wall in a recent gale. Storms, Julian added, were apt to beat up suddenly and violently on this island. The thunderstorms were savage. Then the rain would fall—treasured to the last drop by the Mallorquins who suffered from such grave shortage of water. Every dwelling had a tank waiting for the rainwater. One of the difficulties in keeping a flower garden fresh was this shortage. The old man used to buy water specially for his roses and have it carried up the Calvario in large barrels. As Julian said, cynically, anything could be done when there was enough money.

Julian, working close to the wall that morning, suddenly caught his foot in a hole, tripped and fell against the scaffolding. It shook dangerously, and a piece of heavy timber was dislodged. At the same time Julian happened to be looking upwards. By that terrible million-to-one chance, it was then that a small piece of masonry fell, with the plank, and struck Julian on the throat and shoulder. The blow did not even knock him out, but the pain he suffered in his neck was agonising. My uncle came out of the house at that moment, saw what had happened, and telephoned for the doctor. He was genuinely distressed. He had grown attached to Julian and had persuaded him to stay in Pollensa for a few weeks longer before returning to his studies.

Julian eventually found himself in hospital in Palma where he underwent an operation. Afterwards, they broke to him the terrible news that his thyroid cartilage had been partially destroyed. At that time he couldn't speak at all. Day after day he lay in agony of mind and body, facing the hideous fact that the voice which God had given him—the fine singing voice which should have carried him to fame and fortune—would never be heard again.

It was hell, Julian admitted, *unbelievable hell.*

My uncle appears to have been most upset—shaken from his usual egotism into kindly action on Julian's behalf. He, personally, paid for one specialist after another to fly to the hospital in Palma where the young singer lay crushed by the catastrophe.

From London, Paris, Switzerland, even America, the various doctors came. But each one left after delivering the same gloomy verdict. Julian Marsh would recover some degree of speech with time and specialised therapy. But he would never sing or speak normally again.

Julian rolled and lit another cigarette. I could see the despair of the past returning to his wonderful brilliant eyes, shadowing them, and bringing me a sensation of horror. I could think of nothing more tragic than the gay, handsome young singer at the start of a promising career being reduced to that desperate invalid in the Majorcan hospital, realising that he had to learn to live with a voice that had become a mere croak.

I knew instinctively that it was not just the loss of the money or the fame that might have been Julian's, but the end of his beloved work which had driven him almost to suicide. *He loved to sing*. It was all such a fearful disappointment.

Here I interposed.

"But at least you could still play—you could go on with your piano."

Back came his embittered smile.

"My dear girl, I was never good enough to become a professional pianist and I faced the fact that I wouldn't have enough money to live on—let alone buy a piano. All my possessions—which were modest because during my training, I lived largely in lodgings—had been left in Wales. Once my mother died, everything of value had to be sold. Her pension died with her. I had never worked in England nor stamped an insurance card. Once I became ill, I could not expect help from my own country."

Then, Julian went on, my uncle in one of his most generous moods offered him compensation. The accident had taken place in *his* garden, and whilst working for him. He insisted on allowing Julian five pounds a week—which translated into Spanish money was roughly in the nature of eight hundred pesetas. My uncle also expressed his inten-

tion of making this a permanent annuity on which Julian could rely.

Julian had protested that there was no reason why he should do any such thing, for their friendship was of such brief duration, but the old man insisted.

He bought this cottage and told Julian that he could return there as soon as he was well enough and live in it for as long as he wished.

All this was fine and Julian had to be thankful for small mercies, but he had not relished the idea of accepting charity. For the moment he had no alternative.

He finally left the hospital, where he had been visited by many old friends; a Welsh cousin of his mother's who was still alive and had flown over to his bedside, and by his English and Italian teachers both of whom were deeply sympathetic. But nobody could live on pity, Julian said. Nobody wanted to. As soon as he was fit, he wished to find work. But he found it extraordinarily difficult. A man who was partially dumb was welcome nowhere, besides which he was still unfit. The accident had affected his whole nervous system. Only during the last few months, he said, had he started to feel at all well again.

He was without technical training. Gardening had been a minor hobby. He had no real knowledge of horticulture. In any case he was not fit enough to do manual labour. So he returned to this cottage, grateful for the 'roof' and the small income which came from Paul le Motte. In Majorca there was little chance of finding regular work. Foreigners were not welcomed as labourers. Julian could earn only a few pounds looking after the small garden of an American woman who had bought a house higher up the hill and employed him three days a week.

This was what worried him most—the fact that he could no longer do a useful job.

I could appreciate his distress. Every man has his pride and Julian Marsh was no exception.

The worst part of the story was yet to come.

While my uncle lived, all was well. Although the old recluse rarely came out of his shell, he went on inviting Julian to the house and insisted upon him playing the Steinway daily.

"Get back your zest for living. Your voice has gone but you still have your hands," he used to say.

At first, Julian admitted, he often broke down and cried like a child, his arms folded on the piano keys and his tears bedewing them. But gradually he recovered his lost courage and some interest in life. Physically weak, tiring quickly, he could do little, but the doctors had assured him that in time his health would improve.

My uncle paid for his frequent car journeys to Palma where at first he received the necessary treatment for his throat. Gradually his speech returned just a little, although it could never again be normal.

Then suddenly Uncle Paul had that fatal stroke and died.

He was barely laid to rest before Mark Jervis showed up in his true colours.

Now at last, I really learned something about the young man with the cold, grey eyes who had received me at the House of the Seventh Cross and who seemed so possessive, so mysterious, and to me, so unlikable.

He was far from being the good character Uncle Paul had believed. For too long the old man, enfeebled and more interested in his spectacular art collection than his finances, had left everything in Mark's hands. As Julian had already

implied earlier, he and Mark had never got on. But now they had become mortal enemies. Mark's bitter jealousy quickly showed itself. He found Julian playing the piano a few days after Uncle Paul's funeral, rudely shut down the lid, and ordered Julian out of the house.

"You are no longer welcome here," he had said. "Kindly keep away. I am in charge."

He had also informed Julian that his weekly allowance of pesetas would cease forthwith. Aghast, Julian said he had understood that the allowance was to be permanent—in the nature of compensation for the accident.

Mark thereupon gave a cold smile and informed Julian that there was nothing whatsoever in the Will to confirm this, and that Julian must vacate the cottage. Mark would give him three months to find another home and he called *that* generous.

I listened, horrified. My cheeks flamed.

"But how monstrous!" I exclaimed.

Julian shrugged.

"Maybe I had no right to expect an allowance for life."

"I'm sure my uncle would have wanted you to have it—after all you have told me."

"I certainly imagined so, and was duly grateful. The Will was a most unpleasant surprise to me."

"But he left Mark Jervis a lot of money."

"Oh, yes. Mr. Jervis saw to that. Don't forget that he worked for your uncle over a long number of years, and had ingratiated himself completely into the old man's affections. There was even talk at one time of your uncle adopting Mark legally, but he never did. Instead, during the final months of his life, he seemed to undergo some change of

heart about his own flesh and blood and decided to leave his fortune—to you—his niece."

"I don't believe he meant to leave you out," I declared. "I'm sure this has something to do with Mark Jervis. Perhaps he was told to put in that codicil and forgot it and my uncle imagined it was there. Perhaps he never actually studied the final copy of the Will but just trusted Mark and signed it."

Julian twisted his lips.

"Knowing Mr. Jervis, that is possible. I think he is crooked as hell but I've no proof."

"But the lawyer—who is he?"

Julian grinned.

"Mark Jervis's best friend. A Spanish gentleman, with offices in Barcelona and Palma. Vincente Iturrbo, by name. He and Mark are hand in glove."

"Then maybe they *are* in league," I began heatedly, "and the Spanish gentleman gets a rake-off—anything Mark can scrounge."

"We shall never know," broke in Julian, his dark hazel eyes looked at me with infinite cynicism. "One can hardly go to Mark and accuse him of being in league with a dishonest solicitor."

"I shall find out. I shall make it my business to find out, and since I'm Uncle Paul's heiress and the head of the house now, I shall *not* allow you to be thrown out of your cottage, or forbidden to come up and play the piano any time you wish."

Julian inclined his head. His smile grew less hard.

"You are kind. But I'm *trying* to find regular work and if I overcome this damned whispering I'll do it. I'll go back to Wales. Incidentally that nice little girl, Anita, and I, have

had a sort of pact that when Mark is out and that ghastly woman Renata busy, she lets me in so that I can play the Steinway. I miss it sorely."

"You shall not miss it any more. You shall come when you want and I shall see my uncle's solicitor about you at once. I shall make you that allowance. Mark has by-passed it out of spite, I am sure."

Now Julian rose to his feet, his face reddening.

"I'm sure you mean this kindly but, no thanks. I have no intention of living on a woman."

I started to argue. From every point of view, the compensation was due to him, but he talked me down.

"Forget it, please. I shall not accept it."

I looked around the bare little room dismayed.

"But what will you live on?"

"I still have my job as a part-time gardener. I can buy a flagon of wine, a loaf of bread and some cheese and onions, and treat myself to the odd coffee and tobacco. I still have a few pounds left—resulting from the sale of my Welsh possessions. *And* I have further plans for the future."

"What—?" I asked, fascinated.

He opened a drawer, took out an old leather case, and drew from it a pile of music manuscript.

"I'm composing a small opera," he said. "Both libretto and music. It's quite a good plot. I'll tell you about it one day. One of the worst frustrations I suffer from these days is not being able to play that piano and hear my own compositions."

I held out my hand.

"Please let me see the score. I think it's *marvellous* of you to be doing this."

He shook his head and put the case back in the drawer.

"When I've completed Act One you shall see if you think it marvellous. I take it that you, yourself, are a musician."

Now I sighed and put my hand to my temples.

"I think so. I believe I did once study the piano. But it is all so hazy. I can't remember anything about my life," I added with an embarrassed laugh.

Julian Marsh looked down at me with some curiosity.

"Of course. Anita told me the senorita had lost her memory as a result of the accident."

I nodded.

"Entirely?" he asked.

"Entirely," I nodded forlornly. "When I came to, I couldn't even remember my own name. Nothing. Nothing about my background, or the car smash."

Suddenly the hazel eyes of the man grew warm and compassionate.

"Poor girl. But I know of other cases of amnesia. It need not be permanent. You may recover your memory in time, but I—" he whispered hoarsely, "I will never get back my voice. You have the advantage of me. At least you have *hope*."

Impulsively I held out my hand.

"Let us be friends. I shall talk to Mark at once. You must feel secure about this cottage. And the allowance must continue whatever Mark Jervis says."

Before he could comment on this, there came a sharp knock on the door.

Julian opened the door and let in a flood of sunlight. There, thin, immaculately clad as always—stood the man we had just been discussing.

He did not even greet Julian. He looked across at me with his icy smile.

"I heard you were here, Rune," he said. "I've come to take you home. You shouldn't be out alone."

I felt my hackles rise. I was not going to be dictated to by this man. Now I felt that I had a friend—penniless, ill, almost speechless, but still a fascinating, intriguing friend in Julian Marsh. He would back me up.

I snapped at Mark:

"I am quite capable of getting around by myself, thank you. Please don't bother about me any more."

He continued to smile icily.

"Allow me to take you back."

"I don't need to be 'taken' anywhere by anyone. I'm in the middle of a discussion about Mr. Marsh's opera. I want to go on with it."

If ever I saw stark hatred in a man's eyes, it was in Mark's now as he looked at Julian, although the frozen smile persisted.

"How interesting! I didn't know you were writing an opera, Julian."

"I'm not in the habit of confiding in you, Mark, so you wouldn't know what I am doing."

"I'm sorry—I can't hear you," said Mark with silky malevolence.

"Too bad! But *I* can hear *you*," Julian shot back, "which is, perhaps, unfortunate for me."

Mark glared.

I glanced from one man to the other. That lightning hatred sparking so openly between them was almost a physical thing. I, myself, could *feel* the current. In a queer sort of way it renewed my energies. I was on Julian Marsh's side. I didn't hesitate to show Mark this.

"I'll come home presently," I said and sat down again,

adding: "I shall try one of your cigarettes, and another glass of wine, Mr. Marsh!"

Julian's eyes met mine—half-mocking, half-pleased—as though he appreciated my moral support. He said:

"But of course, Rune—do stay. I shall be delighted. I find your interest in my opera so encouraging."

Silence. I dared not look at Mark. It seemed that he had no weapons left for this particular battle, because he turned and walked out without another word.

A croaking, satirical laugh from Julian:

"Oh, la! la! I haven't enjoyed myself so much for months. Did you see his face? You were *splendid*. I congratulate you. I've never come across anybody else who has snubbed Mr. Jervis—other than myself, and I don't count. But *you* do. He won't like it from *you*."

I frowned while I smoked.

Whatever small victory I had won did not now seem quite so pleasing. Mark's brief appearance and the bitter antagonism between the two men left me uneasy. It was all very well for me to boast that I would do *this* and *that* to help the unfortunate Julian but, as yet, the money-bags were not in my grasp, neither did I know quite how much power my Uncle had left under Mark Jervis's control. It seemed fairly obvious from the way he behaved that he believed himself to be the dictator. I did not like it. I muttered:

"The sooner I see that Will the better. I shall tell Mark to send for this solicitor, Senor Iturrbo, immediately."

Julian rolled a cigarette. After three efforts he lit it then flung the empty match box—a tiny coloured one—on to the table. He swore gently under his breath.

"These bloody Spanish matches! Give me a good old box of Swan Vestas."

I said:

"Tell me something, Julian—I've been puzzled by the rather new-looking décor in some of the main rooms up at the Seventh Cross. It all looks so unlike what I imagine Uncle Paul would have thought up. Do you know anything about it? Has there been a *woman* living at the Seventh Cross lately?"

Julian chuckled hoarsely while he poured me out another glass of wine. I made a mental note of the fact that I must send some wine down to him from what I was sure would be my uncle's well-filled cellar.

Julian told me that the décor up at the big house was indeed the result of 'a woman's touch'. After Uncle Paul died last May, the Spanish solicitor arrived from Palma with his widowed daughter, Senora Camponar.

"Isabel Camponar's husband," went on Julian, "was one of the leading breeders of bulls for the Madrid ring. He was gored to death by one of his own *toros* a year ago. Isabel Camponar moved to Palma to keep house for her father. She is quite a few years older than you, I'd say, but still young and attractive. They had no family. Well, one hears all kinds of scandals on this island—when I first came here, I used to hear about the beautiful red-haired, black-eyed widow being a frequent guest up at the Seventh Cross. She was quite a favourite with your uncle, apparently, and even more of a favourite with his charming secretary . . ." Julian gave his croak of a laugh.

I was listening intently, hanging on every word, wanting to hear the scandal . . . wanting to know more about all these things that were wrapped in mystery for me.

It surprised me when I was told that the beautiful red-head had fallen in love with Mark Jervis. Personally I found

him so repellent. But perhaps the cold smooth Englishman intrigued her—he was so different from the warm, passionate, extroverted men of her own race. Anyhow, it appeared that there was a 'thing' between them, and she and her father spent the entire month of June on the Calvario with Mark. During this time, painters and decorators arrived from Palma, and it was Isabel Camponar who had flung out so many of my uncle's antiques and old draperies, and modernised the salon, and the bedroom suite which I now occupied. Now things grew clear to me. Those coral curtains—that black carpet—the gold and crystal candle-lights —the huge modern shades—all these had been chosen by Senora Camponar and, presumably, were to be paid for out of Uncle Paul's estate.

"But is Mark going to marry her? Did she suppose she was decorating the place for *herself*?" I asked Julian.

"That's the amusing part," he said. "Typical of Mark Jervis, who likes to walk across a few dead bodies in order to achieve his own ends—he ditched her as soon as he had no further use for her."

"I don't understand," I said. "Wasn't he *in love* with the senora?"

A guarded look crossed Julian Marsh's haggard, handsome face. For the first time he avoided both my gaze and my questioning.

"I've told you enough, Rune. Too much. Anything else I could say would be purely guesswork. You are Mr. le Motte's niece and heiress. Everybody knows that. But nobody save Mark Jervis and his lawyer knows the actual terms of the Will. I can only assure you that there has been a complete shut-down between Isabel and Mark. She hasn't been near Pollensa lately. Obviously something has hap-

pened. But that is not my business. I think, don't you, that perhaps you had better go back to your splendid house and leave me to enjoy my bread and onions alone."

I stood up. I felt that I was no longer wanted here. But I bore this strange, unhappy man no resentment. I held out my hand.

"Good-bye for now. I shall tell you the result of my meeting with the lawyer or *abogado* as Mark calls him."

Julian took my hand and held it for a second then dropped it as though he had been burned. Yet strangely enough I felt an extraordinary vibration passing from his fingers into mine. I read sudden undisguised torment in his eyes. He looked at me, I thought, as though I were the symbol to him of both heaven and hell. Of course I knew I must be exaggerating—that he probably felt nothing at all except boredom; he had suddenly become bored by me. But I did also feel strongly that he knew more about Mark and this Spanish widow than he wished to tell me.

"Thanks for talking to me. I'm glad you nearly fainted on my doorstep," he said.

"I shall come again," I said rather defiantly.

"But not with any offer of money, please. I took it from your uncle—but from you I will not accept one peseta," he warned me.

"We shall see," I said.

"We shall *not* see," came his furious whisper.

I bit my lip. He opened the door. As I moved out, he said:

"*Hasta la vista.*"

That wakened in me some faint knowledge that I was not altogether ignorant of the Spanish language, for I answered immediately:

"*Hasta luego—adios!*"

Then, slowly, my brain teeming with all kinds of exciting thoughts and speculations, I left Julian Marsh's tiny cottage and climbed laboriously up the Calvario back to the House of the Seventh Cross.

8

THE next time I spoke to Mark Jervis it could hardly be called an agreeable encounter. After the hour spent with Julian Marsh, I felt extremely tired and went straight to my room. I lay down. Later on, Renata called out that she had brought me a cup of English tea, but I told her to go away. I wanted to sleep. It seemed that I had had enough sleep this last week or two, for I merely dozed. I went on thinking about Julian and his music and the story of the accident.

Finally the little travelling clock beside my bed showed me that it was six. I could hear the Angelus bells ringing from the monastery. I got up. I felt suddenly well—much stronger. I realised that I was now on the road to recovery—physically if not mentally. I decided that for the moment I must accept the fact that I was Rune le Motte. I wouldn't let the past worry me any more. I would swim with the tide. And for the moment the tide was rushing me into an extraordinary and quite interesting situation.

I looked through my wardrobe, found an exciting pair of gold lamé, rather tight-stretched pants with a sleeveless matching top. These, I thought, would be a change from dressing-gown or cotton frocks. A glance in my mirror showed me that I looked very slim and elegant in the gold *après-ski* outfit. My hair had grown too long—it was down to shoulder length. I must find out where I could have it cut.

I went downstairs, walked into my uncle's study and found Mark there. He was pouring himself out a drink. A

tray with ice-bucket, and a dish of olives, stood on the table by the window.

Mark turned and looked at me, surprised and pleased but almost at once he began to reproach me.

"You shouldn't have gone down to Julian Marsh's cottage. It was very unwise, Rune."

Ready for battle, I sat on the arm of a big leather easy chair and swung one leg, glowering at him.

"Indeed, Mark? I'd like a soft drink—no, no gin—just some iced lime or lemon, please," I said.

He poured a lime and water with ice into a crystal goblet and handed it to me.

"I take it that you feel restored. Would you like to dine with me tonight instead of having your dinner sent up?"

"Yes," I nodded. "That's the idea. I seem to feel giddy now and again but Dr. Fernandez assured me that's only natural, and that I'll soon get over it."

Mark looked me up and down, and drained his glass.

"To your continued progress! And may I say how charming you look this evening?"

"You can say what you want but I refuse to be dictated to. I shall choose my own friends in Pollensa."

Mark raised his brows.

"Your attitude astonishes me."

I put my tongue in my cheek and tossed my hair away from my face.

"Did you expect to find Uncle Paul's niece a soft weak little thing willing to be completely dominated by you, Mark?"

"I don't know what I expected, Rune. But after all you are *very* young and you don't know Majorca, and you are hardly capable of deciding who of the locals you should or

shouldn't make friends with—that is, until you understand the situation here a bit more thoroughly."

I sipped my cool drink.

"When you say *situation*—do you mean, for instance, my association with you, Mark—?"

"Largely."

"Mark," I said, "you have been acting in a very strange manner toward me ever since I arrived here. I may have lost all memory of the past but my brain still works, you know. And I still have feelings. The injury to my head hasn't made me quite idiotic."

His thin lips stretched into that apology that he called a smile.

"I would never have called you so. At the same time you are alone in the world and not an experienced woman. You need some direction."

Suddenly I laughed.

"My dear Mark, you amaze me. You talk like an aged grandpapa. My memory may have failed but my passport tells me that I am over twenty-one, and I feel absolutely capable of taking care of myself and running my own life. We're living in the 1960's, you know. Girls of my age don't need *direction*. And you, yourself, are not all that old, are you?"

"Six years your senior."

"That gives you no right to behave as though you are my guardian. You have been my uncle's secretary for a long time, and are privileged. But not so far as I am concerned. I presume you are one of the Executors of uncle's Will."

"I am. The other is your uncle's *abogado*, Senor Iturrbo."

"Ah, yes. Mr. Marsh has already told me a thing or two about *him*."

The frozen mask dropped from Mark's face for a second and his eyes gleamed.

"Oh, he has, has he? That man ought to be hounded off the island. He is a lazy, no-good, worthless fellow who lives off pity, and tries to work the sympathy-stop with gullible young women like yourself."

I shook my head. I felt quite unmoved by Mark's venomous attack on the unhappy singer down there in the cottage. I had expected it, really. I said:

'You don't seem to like Mr. Marsh."

"I neither like nor trust him. He had no right to discuss Senor Iturrbo or our private affairs. Of course he has a motive in cultivating you. He tried from the start to worm his way into your uncle's affections and no doubt it was a nasty shock to him to learn that he has inherited precisely nothing."

The venom left me cold.

"My dear Mark," I said, "whilst admitting that Julian Marsh was only a stranger to me a few hours ago—I still cannot believe that he is an adventurer—out for easy money. On the contrary—I have learned that it is anathema to him to have to accept charity of any kind. He took money from Uncle Paul only because the accident that all but destroyed his vocal cords happened in this garden, and he knew my uncle was a wealthy man. If Uncle Paul didn't make permanent provision for him, he *should* have done. And what he has not done, I intend to do."

Mark stared at me as though stupefied.

"You mean in such a short space of time Julian Marsh has talked you into believing his lies?"

"What lies?" I asked impatiently. "You can't wipe out facts. Julian Marsh was training to be a singer and rising to

fame, just before he was injured. Is *that* a lie or are you trying to tell me that he destroyed his own voice in order to pick up a few pesetas from my uncle?"

"No, of course not. But from the moment of the accident, he preyed on Uncle Paul's generosity."

Somehow to hear Mark using the familiar 'Uncle Paul' annoyed me. And strange to say I hadn't the slightest confidence in anything he said. Julian Marsh was a stranger but if I had any knowledge of human beings at all, I would not label him the type to 'prey' on others.

"Perhaps," I said coolly, "it might interest you to know that when I offered Julian permanent compensation for the loss of his voice and career he flatly refused to accept it."

Another stare of surprise from Mark and a deep scowl. I seemed to be getting behind his mask all the time, which I found rather satisfactory. I did so dislike Mark Jervis. For one thing, he had no sense of humour and I couldn't bear people who were incapable of laughing. I could imagine it might be *fun* with that poor, almost voiceless boy, down the road. Despite all his miseries he could still find humour in certain situations. I hadn't forgotten how he had shaken with laughter after Mark walked out of his cottage. Bitter humour it might be—but Julian had it.

Then Mark said:

"Why did you offer Julian compensation? You must be out of your mind."

"Just why?"

"You don't know him. I keep telling you, you don't *know* what sort of a man he is!"

"And I keep telling you that I prefer to draw my own conclusions," I retorted. "I think you are very unpleasant

about Julian. *You* are nicely settled but just because my uncle is dead, why be so spiteful to that unfortunate singer, and want to chuck him out of his only home? How would you like to have lost *your* voice and *your* capacity to make a living and be thrown out of *your* home?" I ended rather childishly.

Mark poured himself out another drink. His body was tense with anger. He said:

"Might I just ask you how you propose to pay Julian Marsh any money? When you answered my first letter after Uncle Paul's death, you told me you had nothing but a small allowance which comes from your American grandfather."

Suddenly I felt troubled. I had no *idea* what I had inherited from my grandfather—nor that he was American. This was where my memory began to play tricks with me. I felt humiliated because I had to ask Mark to tell me more about myself.

"Sorry," I snapped, "I just don't remember. So I get an allowance from America, do I?"

"Yes. Your mother was a Philadelphian. She died when you were a small child. I don't suppose you remember her."

The old feeling of frustration returned to aggravate me.

"No, I don't, or my father, and he hasn't been long dead, has he?"

"No. Six months ago he had a coronary—in Paris."

I put the tips of my fingers against my forehead and shut my eyes.

So my mother came from Philadelphia, and my father from Paris. He was brought up in England and was more English than French.

That was what Mark was telling me. Uncle Paul, too, had been educated in England. Grandfather le Motte himself seemed to have been more English than French and married an English girl. Both his sons went to Eton and Oxford. *Why* couldn't I recall one single thing about the family to which I belonged? How long would I suffer from the effects of this ghastly concussion?

Suddenly I interrupted Mark:

"Don't tell me any more, please. I'll accept what you say but it's still Greek to me. Have you a letter or something that I have written? I'd like to see my own handwriting."

A tinge of regret showed itself in Mark's eyes. He unlocked the door of the desk and pulled out a few sheets of fine paper.

"Rather annoying—you never actually wrote at length in your own hand. You typed. I have only your own signature for you to see."

"Why did I type—?" I began in a disagreeable voice but stopped. Suddenly out of the mists of confusion I could hear the *click, click* of the keys, and see myself bending over a typewriter. Yes, *I could type*. Of that I was certain.

With deep interest I read what I had written to Mark Jervis. The address, handsomely embossed on the expensive paper meant nothing to me. It appeared to be that of an apartment in Paris. But every word in my letters to Mark mystified me. They might have been written by a stranger.

I found nothing in them to reawaken my memory. In the first letter I apologised to Mark for using a typewriter. I said that I had just been given a little portable and found it easier and quicker to type than to write, as I had such an 'illegible scrawl'. And that I was deeply interested and touched to learn that my unknown uncle had left me money

and property in Majorca. I would come to see him, Mr. Jervis, quite soon. I wrote:

"In answer to your questions about my personal life, I am neither engaged to be married nor likely to be. I value my freedom. There is one boy I am very fond of but, like myself, he doesn't believe in marriage. You also ask if I have anybody to advise me except Daddy's solicitor . . . But I have absolutely no relatives left. A great many friends, of course . . ."

I lifted my head and looked at Mark.

"Who incidentally is my father's solicitor? I'd like to get in touch with him."

"I have his name and address," said Mark, "but what do you wish to know from him?"

I bit my lip. It was trembling a little.

"I would like to *see* him—anybody in fact who knew me in the past and who might revive my memory."

"I will suggest that one of the partners flies over to Pollensa as soon as possible," said Mark politely.

Feverishly I examined another of my letters. But it had nothing much in it. I suggested a possible date for my flight to Palma but cancelled it, in a postscript. I seemed to have been rather a casual, muddled sort of girl, I thought. I felt rather muddled at the moment, yes, but not at all casual. Nor did I want to swing immoderately from one idea to another. I felt cool and practical. If this other was the old Rune le Motte, I must try to change her, I decided with irony.

My last letter was brief and merely informed Mark that I intended to come to Palma 'within the next few days'. I didn't fix the date.

Feeling sullen and dissatisfied, I pushed the letters back into Mark's hand.

"They ring no bells for me. I can't for the life of me remember ever having walked down the *Boulevard Suchet* in Paris."

Mark smiled and put the letters back into the drawer.

"It'll all come back in time. Dr. Fernandez said so. Don't force it."

"But I want to know—*I want to be sure*," I broke out, and felt my cheeks grow flaming hot.

"Of course, of course," said Mark soothingly. "Now would it interest you to see your birth certificate? You sent me one in order to prove your identity. I have a copy of it here. The original is in Senor Iturrbo's office."

"I don't care about my birth certificate but I want to meet the solicitor. *And* see that Will."

"Believe me, you are not yet fit for legal discussions—" began Mark.

"I don't care what you think. I want to see the Will," I interrupted.

Mark put down his empty glass, walked to the fireplace—carved stone like all the others in this house—and stood with his back to it, as though there were a fire there.

"My dear girl, the last thing I wish is for you to be upset or thwarted. I'll telephone Senor Iturrbo tonight and ask him to come to Pollensa at once if he can."

"Haven't you got a copy of the Will?" I demanded.

"No," replied Mark, and I wasn't at all sure he was speaking the truth.

"Give me back one of my letters," I said. "I'll sign my name and see if the signatures tally."

Mark returned my first letter to him.

I seized a pen from uncle's desk and scribbled the name on a sheet of notepaper:

Rune le Motte

Then I examined the two signatures.

The one in the letter seemed to me to be bigger, more florid with a flourish to the 'R' and the 'M'. On the other hand my own writing on that particular evening didn't seem *completely* different. Or was it that I had unconsciously copied the one in the letter? Oh, I didn't know! But my accident may well have accounted for a slight irregularity in the two handwritings. Anyhow, why should I go on doubting that *I was* Rune? I was really being rather silly, full of fantasies which had no foundation.

"Well, there it is!" I muttered.

Mark bent over my shoulder, looked at the two signatures and smiled.

"I don't see much difference—only that your writing this evening is a little more irregular. But people do have irregularities in their writing. I have noticed that quite a lot of people make a Greek 'e' sometimes, and an ordinary copy-book 'e' at others. In my own signature I often put a small 's' at the end of *Jervis* and sometimes a large loopy one. I think people who study handwriting say that people write in the mood they are *feeling* at the time. Certainly one's hand changes as one matures."

I shrugged my shoulders. Mark seemed to insist on treating me as though I were a child, which was absurd. I was of age.

What had happened on my twenty-first birthday, I wondered, and suddenly felt forlorn and lost.

Who, I wondered, was the boy I mentioned in my letter

—the one I was fond of but didn't want to marry. Why was I so dead against marriage? I must try to find out who this boy-friend was. The solicitor might know. It would be marvellous if I could see and speak to someone I had been even remotely fond of. Surely it would reawaken my memory! I got up from the desk, lit a cigarette and continued to speak to Mark with the new authority that I was both learning and feeling.

"I presume that since I am of age and my identity has been proved, I have come into Uncle Paul's money and can use it."

Mark gave me a furtive look, I thought. Taking a cigar from the cabinet, he lit it. The rich aroma filled the study. He said:

"Not altogether."

"What does that mean?"

"That there are certain formalities to be gone through before you can touch the money. Certain conditions were laid down."

"What conditions?"

Mark looked at me curiously.

"Then you don't remember one thing about the Will? I did send you details, you know. I told you the most important clause."

"It's all a blank to me," I said.

"But did you not notice in your second letter to me that you acknowledged *mine* about the Will? You replied that you did not wish to discuss the details until you had seen me, since they were so awkward and complicated."

"Y-yes," I said hesitantly, "but I still haven't the least idea what it is all about. I suppose the finances are complicated. Is there more to it than that?"

Then Mark looked at me in a very strange way indeed.

"I don't think tonight is the right moment for discussing the Will. Please let us leave it until Senor Iturrbo comes."

I sprang to my feet.

"Oh, you madden me! You seem to delight in being mysterious. Everything that goes on in this house is wrapped in mystery . . ." I was trembling all over now. "I hope the interview with Senor Iturrbo can be arranged immediately. But whatever the conditions are, I shall need some spending money, shan't I? I haven't a cent."

"We will communicate with your Bank in Paris and suggest they let you know when your next allowance is due from Philadelphia," said Mark smoothly.

"Very well. But until I can make it legal, I want an assurance from you that you will not evict Mr. Marsh from his cottage."

Mark's expression changed. He looked at me over the rims of his glasses. His lips curled.

"Dear me! You *have* fallen for all the rubbish Julian Marsh talks."

"I repeat," I said, "that I do *not* want him evicted. That cottage belonged to my uncle so it now belongs to me."

"Unfortunately," said Mark, "*it belongs to me*. He left you this house, Rune, but I asked Uncle Paul to give me the cottage. I have always thought it delightful."

Then I surprised myself by being positively beastly to Mark.

"You mean you *knew* Julian Marsh had nowhere else to live and you wanted to get him out so you grabbed the cottage. All right—if you turn Julian out, I shall invite him to stay here in *my* house. I shall have the piano put in one of the rooms downstairs. He can use the room as a bed-sitter—

until his opera is finished; I think it would be disgraceful to evict him just when he's down and out. He isn't a strong, hulking brute. He is a musician—an artist—a man of sensibility, and, at the moment, a bundle of nerves. It'll take him a long time to get over that ghastly accident. It's inhuman of you to behave as you do toward him."

I stopped, breathless. I really didn't know what made me fight so fiercely on behalf of Julian. It was as though some instinct was impelling me to do so. Mark Jervis looked aghast. His pale grey eyes glittered. He said quite quietly:

"I shall not take what you say too seriously, Rune. You have been very ill. You are obviously not yourself yet, and you have had the wool pulled over your eyes by this unscrupulous fortune-hunter."

"Don't be ridiculous! That's the last thing Julian Marsh is."

"You know nothing about him. But we have already gone over this more than once—it's becoming boring. Look, Rune—I'd do anything to please you, but I am not going to revoke my decision to take possession of my little cottage before Christmas. Julian is lucky to have until then to find himself another roof."

"Then I shall carry out my plan and invite him to live here," I said defiantly. "I'm sure it's what my uncle would have wished."

"If your uncle had wished it, he would have mentioned Julian in his Will."

"He meant to—I *know* he meant to—but—"

"But what?" asked Mark in a dangerously quiet voice as though challenging me to say something I might be sorry for.

I held my peace, but my cheeks continued to burn and

my heart to beat fast with resentment. Oh, if there was only somebody here who knew more about this matter than I did—who could back me up—who could help me. I could see plainly that I could do nothing much now until I myself inspected the Will.

Mark added:

"And I must ask you not to invite Mr. Julian Marsh to come and live at the Seventh Cross. It is not your property just at present, Rune. For the moment *I* am in charge."

"Then I shall go away—back to Paris!" I cried. "I don't want to inherit Uncle Paul's money and live here! I don't care about the horrible inheritance—it's all repulsive—" I stopped, on the verge of tears, almost hysterical.

Mark took off his horn-rims, wiped them, replaced them and came toward me. In a more gentle voice than he had ever used he said:

"Rune, Rune, please don't distress yourself like this. You will have one of your blackouts again. How can you possibly go back to Paris? You have no home there now. You got rid of everything and sold the lease. You were going to live in an hotel just before you came here. You said so in letter number three. You have always had everything you want, Rune. You were brought up in luxury. You couldn't *begin* to live on your grandfather's small legacy. Besides, you will enjoy living in Pollensa once you get to know Majorca better. It's absurd of you to want to quarrel with me like this and rush away before you have given me a chance to make you happy."

I calmed down. I didn't feel like quarrelling with anybody. I was hot, miserable, and terribly lonely. I said in a choked voice:

"Why should *you* be concerned about me? You are an

Executor of the Will and at present, as you say, in charge here. But as far as the future is concerned you won't have much to do with my personal happiness, I'm quite sure."

He made no answer. Once more his face settled into that expressionless mask which I so disliked. Then he said:

"Oh, well—if you feel so strongly about our voiceless hero down there at the Sixth Cross, and are determined to carry this torch for him—I must relent and let him stay where he is, until further notice."

My spirits rose. I began to feel less antagonistic toward Mark. Perhaps, I told myself, he was just thoroughly jealous and stupid over Julian because Uncle Paul had liked him. Perhaps there was nothing really wrong with Mark except that he had an unattractive personality and unfortunately put my back up every time I spoke to him. I must try to see things from his point of view. It couldn't be much fun having a strange girl like myself arrive on the scene, trying to undermine his authority and take over the reins in the house. I really felt rather ashamed of my aggressiveness.

"Okay, Mark—let's call a truce. There is no need for us to quarrel, and I won't run away. I admit it would be silly. But I do think you ought to be a little more generous toward poor Julian."

I could almost see Mark wince but he took my hand eagerly and carried it to his lips in Continental fashion.

"Thanks, Rune," he said softly, "believe me, there is nothing I want more than your friendship and goodwill. Your uncle wished us to work together."

"Work together?" I repeated.

"We will discuss it all when Senor Iturrbo arrives," Mark said lightly. "Let me pour you out another lime and ice. Let us try to enjoy our dinner together this evening. I told

Renata to lay the table out on the terrace; it is such a superb night."

Having achieved my small victory, I was incautious enough to make a further demand upon Mark Jervis.

"And if you really want to please me," I said with a certain amount of feminine guile, "promise to allow Julian to come and play the piano up here whenever he wants."

Once again I could see Mark stiffen with resentment. But he acquiesced.

"As you wish. You seem to be set on helping him. I won't try and stop you. You must find out for yourself what sort of a chap he is."

"I intend to," I said, rather naughtily.

But suddenly I felt better. I was in a good mood as we walked out on to the terrace.

9

THERE were lamps hanging from the trees, turning them a strange unrealistic green. The table, set for two on the terrace, was attractive with its lace cloth, fine silver and tall Venetian hock glasses. But as I seated myself opposite Mark, I was not thinking about him or Uncle Paul's Will, or the wonderful food and wine. I contemplated with pleasure the idea of walking down to the cottage tomorrow to tell Julian that he could feel the cottage was his, at least until his opera had been written. Also that he could come and play the Steinway whenever he liked.

Play it for me—not only for himself, I thought victoriously.

It was extraordinary how Julian's personality intrigued me. But I tried to forget what he had said and to make myself agreeable to Mark.

He told me a great deal about the island and about Uncle Paul's life as a recluse during his latter years. Then I asked him suddenly:

"What are *you* going to do in the future, Mark?"

He was sipping his coffee and smoking one of Uncle Paul's big cigars. He put his cup down and glanced at me.

He looked satisfied, smug, and a little odd, to my way of thinking, when he opened those pebble-grey eyes of his to their widest extent. A smile broke the frozen mask of his thin face.

"What do you think I should do, Rune?"

"Well, I suppose, as you are coming into money you won't want another secretarial post."

He put his tongue in his cheek.

"No, I shall not."

"And I don't suppose you will want to stay in Majorca. You were very good to look after Uncle Paul for so long but you are still only in your twenties—like me," I added rather proudly, remembering that I was twenty-one. "You will want to spread your wings."

"That's true, but I shall not leave Majorca," he said suavely.

I raised my eyebrows and began to drink my own coffee, which Renata had just poured into a tiny, fragile cup of great beauty. White, egg-shell china; fluted, with gold-leaf interior. Everything here was beautiful and expensive. But, I thought, it would be a pity if I were to become mistress of the House of the Seventh Cross and Mark were to remain on the island. It would be difficult to avoid him and I couldn't bear the man.

Whatever veil had fallen between me and my past, yesterday and today were clear enough. I recalled the vastly entertaining story that Julian had told me about Mark and Isabel Camponar.

I plunged without much subtlety into the fray.

"Mark—I hear that this house was redecorated to a large extent by the daughter of Uncle Paul's Spanish solicitor."

A look of intense annoyance crossed Mark's face.

"And who supplied this gossip?"

"What does that matter?" I said coolly.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah, well, I can guess. Since you know so much already —yes—Senora Camponar did have a hand in creating a more

modern décor—suitable for a girl like you. It was very dark and old-fashioned before."

"I don't like modern things. I prefer antiques."

"There are plenty of them left," he said drily.

"Tell me more about the beautiful Isabel Camponar, Mark," I persisted, and felt that I was being rather naughty and mischievous.

But I was not prepared for the violence of Mark's reactions. Usually he was so cold and collected. His was the type of nature, I supposed, that could swing very rapidly from ice to fire for he sprang to his feet and literally snarled at me.

"More of Julian Marsh's gossip? I tell you, that man is a menace."

Touché, I thought. Mark doesn't like the truth.

"I see no reason why you should get so cross," I said. "Isn't it true that Isabel Camponar is very beautiful and used to be a frequent visitor here?"

He seemed suddenly deflated. He sat down again heavily.

"Yes," he said more quietly. "Some people think Isabel beautiful."

"Not you?" I was still in a mischievous mood.

But Mark was not to be drawn and was unwilling to admit that he had had an affair with Isabel and dropped her like a stone when it suited him.

"I quite like Isabel," he said grudgingly. "She used to come here often during your uncle's lifetime."

I plunged right into it.

"I am disappointed. I thought you were going to confess to a wonderful romance and tell me you were thinking of getting married."

Again I was startled by Mark's reactions. A look of

absolute fury came into his eyes. But this time he controlled it. He even smiled.

"How amusing! Well, I can assure you that I am not going to marry Isabel Camponar if that is what you have been led to believe by Julian Marsh. On the other hand I *am* thinking of marrying."

"Do tell me more," I exclaimed, quite interested.

"In my own good time," he said.

Then my spirit of mischief faded. I felt uneasy because of the way he looked at me. What in heaven's name was in his mind? How cagey he was! I felt a sudden longing to dash down the hill to Julian's cottage and hear that bitter, husky, whispering voice telling me what I was sure would be the truth.

Then I noticed something that caused my heart to leap in a curious and painful fashion, as though I had received a shock.

The light from the candles on the table suddenly reflected the gleam from a ring on Mark's little finger. I saw it plainly as he was lifting his cigar to his lips. A gold and onyx signet ring. The crest was unusual. *And I had seen it before.* On whose finger I could not recall *but I had seen it.*

I said sharply:

"That signet ring. I seem to recognise it."

He lifted his left hand and looked at the ring calmly.

"That is more than possible. It is not the le Motte crest, but that of the Corberry family—into which your paternal grandfather married. After his death, your English grandmother passed it on to your father. Your Uncle Paul had a similar one. Uncle Paul asked me to give this to you for any son you might have. I have been waiting for a propitious moment."

Why should he wear it, I thought, crossly. What impudence!

I went on as though propelled.

"My father had one, I am sure. In fact, I saw it quite recently. I'm not sure where."

Mark shrugged and drew the ring from his little finger.

"Allow me," he said with stiff courtesy and handed it to me. I reached out for it. He slipped it on to my third finger and I felt a cold shudder go through me because his hand touched mine. But I looked down at the ring, fascinated. It was a strange design—a sword encircled by a chain, and underneath the inscription:

'Capiat qui capere possit.'

"What does the motto mean?" I asked Mark.

" 'Let him take who can take'," said Mark.

I frowned. "Not attractive, I must say. I don't like people who *take* greedily."

"I can see you have illusions, my dear Rune," said Mark with his frigid smile.

I felt like hitting him—he annoyed me so intensely. Somehow he was inhuman. Full of affectations, too. He must have done well for Uncle Paul to have liked him and kept him here for so many years. Yes—I could imagine Mark being horribly efficient. And he was probably very different in the old days. He adopted this high and mighty attitude now, but while my uncle was alive, little doubt he *crawled*. He *would*, if he had an ulterior motive.

I felt no liking for my grandmother's signet ring and suddenly took it off and thrust it back at Mark.

"I don't want it. I've no real interest in the Corberry

family and I don't like the motto. It's horrid," I said.

Mark replaced the ring on his little finger (with alacrity I thought). He said:

"You're an idealist, aren't you, Rune? One must *take* sometimes, you know, or get nothing."

"That may be your philosophy but it isn't mine. I would prefer to take only what I am offered, rather than use the sword or a chain or in fact use any kind of force so as to get what I want."

"You'll grow up," said Mark in a patronising voice, then rose. "Shall we go back to the study?"

"No, thanks," I said abruptly. "I'm off to bed."

He walked with me to the hall.

"I wish we could be friends. I can see that you have got something against me."

"Not at all," I muttered untruthfully and my cheeks grew hot.

He took my hand and raised it to his lips; it was the second time he had done so and I didn't like it any better then than I had done the first time.

"You will know sooner or later how deeply I have your interests at heart and how much I want to please you," he said in quite a gentle voice.

I couldn't do anything then but try to appear more gracious and thank him. As I went up the stairs I looked over my shoulder and saw him still standing there smoking a cigar, watching me.

I ran into my bedroom. Without switching on the light I walked toward my balcony.

I felt unhappy and upset for no particular reason except that Mark Jervis was beginning to frighten me and I hoped it would not be long before I could order him out of my

house. Yes, if it was to be *my* house, Mark must go. I couldn't 'take' him.

Let him have what money he had been left and what possessions he coveted, plus Uncle Paul's nasty signet ring and the rest of it. I didn't want anything but to be left alone. I was sure there was a missing link in all these affairs somewhere and that I must find it soon, or face a packet of trouble.

I stepped out on to my balcony. The night was glorious—warm and still. The full moon and a splendid galaxy of stars made the sky look transcendently bright and beautiful.

Suddenly I saw a shadow of a figure, down below, and the gleam of a cigarette-end. A man was down there, smoking just beneath my balcony.

I leaned over the wrought-iron rails and peered closer. The intruder looked up at me. As the moonlight revealed him more plainly I recognised the pale, handsome, bitter face of Julian Marsh.

Suddenly I felt a curious warmth and relief. I called down to him breathlessly:

"Julian!"

Obviously he was unable to make himself heard, so he just waved a hand at me, then turned to walk away. I supposed he was taking a stroll on this enchanting night.

But I called him back.

"Hst!—Julian—don't go." I felt reckless. I didn't care whether Mark Jervis heard or disapproved. "Wait a minute, Julian, I've got something to tell you."

Julian stood still.

The next moment, I ran quickly down the stairs and let myself out of the front door.

Julian had started to walk down the hill and had almost

reached the door of his cottage when he heard me calling him.

He turned. Hands in pocket, he gave a queer little half bow, which was characteristic of him. Whatever he felt about life these days he was still at heart a man of some dignity—and courtesy.

"Why, hello! So they've let you out even at this witching hour," he whispered.

I giggled, suddenly feeling light-hearted.

"The witching hour surely is midnight. It's only half-past ten."

"But little girls ought to be in bed. Hasn't Uncle Mark laid down strict rules?"

I laughed scornfully.

"Uncle Mark indeed! I'm afraid I don't regard him as an uncle or, really, as anything but a hateful outsider, who I've got to put up with for the moment. But as I told him to-night, he won't be allowed to stay at the Seventh Cross much longer."

"My! my!" came Julian's husky whisper. "We *are* becoming a dictator! I haven't been so amused for a long while."

"Well, aren't you going to ask me in for a cigarette?" I asked him rather defiantly, and was rewarded by the look of surprise in his eyes. They were large and bright in the moonlight, thickly-lashed. He really was good-looking—

"What a scandalous suggestion," he whispered and grinned.

"Oh, let's have a scandal," I said, rather astonished by my own recklessness. "I'm so sick of being shut up in that gorgeous, menacing house with its gloomy old towers and hush-hush atmosphere. I always feel I'm being watched."

"I'm sure Mark Jervis watches you. Incidentally, you may not realise it but you look very attractive tonight," Julian whispered.

I felt my cheeks grow warm. But I was pleased.

"Yes," he went on, looking me up and down, "a shimmering golden girl in that *après-ski* outfit. You don't look quite real."

"But I am," I said breathlessly. "And I've got wonderful news for you."

He pushed open the door of his cottage and allowed me to pass in. He switched on the one and only lamp. I saw the remains of a frugal supper still on the table.

"Sorry for such a sordid scene," he said. "I didn't expect a visit from a lovely girl in gold lamé. In fact I never expect anybody—and don't usually want anyone."

"Are you sure you want *me* here?"

He folded his arms and shut one eye which lent him a slightly dramatic air. He might be a one-eyed brigand, I thought, in one of those operas in which he used to sing. The blue jeans, the brown bare feet in sandals, the blue-silk handkerchief knotted loosely about his throat, all gave him a theatrical look.

Once again he gave that queer haughty bow of the head.

"*Muy guapa*," he whispered. (I knew this meant beautiful.) "Your hair is pure gold in the lamplight."

"You're being very flattering all of a sudden," I laughed, and the laugh must have had a slightly nervous ring because with a quick change of front, he scowled at me.

"Flattering girls has never really been a pastime of mine. I was only looking at you from the aesthetic point of view. This moonlight and the fact that I'm damnably lonely these days seem to have softened me up."

"I see," I said, biting my lip. "Well, let's get off the subject of me and talk about you."

"Do sit down," he said.

I seated myself in one of the uncomfortable wooden chairs.

"Shall I roll you one of my stinkers?" he asked.

"No, thank you," I said and opened my bag and pulled out a packet of American cigarettes. I offered it to him and he took one.

"How nice! I can't afford expensive smokes these days."

I gave him the whole packet.

"Mark has a cabinet full—plus Uncle Paul's cigars. Do keep these."

Julian literally flung the cigarettes back at me.

"No, thanks. Keep your charity, please. I don't want it. I told you so this morning."

"You really are difficult and rather rude—" I began.

"You don't have to stay here," he croaked. "You can get up and go home right now as far as I'm concerned. Nobody has asked you to put up with me or my difficult nature."

For an instant I felt offended and cross. I almost left—then I realised what lay behind Julian Marsh's attitude to life. One should be sorry for him rather than reproach him for being rude or awkward. If ever a man had a legitimate chip on his shoulder, *he* had. On the other hand I hesitated to be understanding or friendly because he seemed so bitterly to resent any form of pity. He *was* difficult and his moods were unpredictable. Perhaps that was what made him so intriguing. I said coolly:

"Sorry I've upset you."

"You haven't," he snapped.

"Oh, don't be so inhospitable!" I snapped back. "I'm here as your guest. Remember?"

Now his lips curved downwards in a sardonic smile and he flung back his head. I could see the muscles of his brown throat working as though he was silently laughing. That inaudible laughter somehow upset me because I thought it was all so tragic. But I knew that it was more than my life was worth to say so. I laughed with him instead.

He said:

"You are beginning to interest me, Rune."

Although that name still sounded strange to my ears, I thought it rather fascinating. The soft drawn out R-U-N-E, whispered by Julian Marsh.

He went on: "Yes, you amuse me. I must say you've got guts and you are not conventional, praise the Lord. Conventional people, with their little lives slotted and dotted like punch-cards in a computer, bore me stiff. Whatever you remember or don't remember about your past life, you must always have been slightly out of the ordinary. Besides, you stand up to that snake, Jervis—that's the cream of the jest. It does my warped soul a power of good."

"I can't bear him."

"What's happened since I talked to you this morning?"

"Several things. He laid on a glamorous dinner *á deux* and tried to impress me, but didn't. Before that, he showed me all the letters I wrote him from Paris. I wanted to examine my own handwriting but unfortunately my letters were all typed; there was only the signature for me to investigate."

Julian was watching me, blowing the cigarette smoke, which he seemed to be enjoying, through his nostrils, and inhaling deeply.

"At least you know you can type."

"Yes. And I seem to remember that I can do shorthand as well. But I wish I'd *written* those letters."

"Why bother about it? Has your memory gone so far that you can't even recognise your own signature?"

"Well, I compared it with one I wrote this evening at Uncle Paul's desk and it wasn't a replica by any means."

"What's it matter?" interrupted Julian. "You are not, surely, suggesting that you *aren't* in fact Rune le Motte?"

I rubbed my forehead and frowned.

"No, I suppose not. *I must be.*"

"I keep telling you to stop worrying. It'll all come back. Concussion can play funny tricks."

"That's what the doctor says."

"I presume you are alluding to that idiotic Spanish gentleman, Dr. Fernandez?"

"*Is* he idiotic? I rather like him."

"Oh, he's as kindly as Father Christmas and pulls all the right words and pills out of the bag. But I don't think he knows much about the human body. Still, I have very little faith in any doctors."

"I understand—you've had a terrible experience."

I saw him touch the depression on his throat and the livid white scar that ran across it. Then he clenched his teeth and shook his head as though to brush off the memory of his past medical history.

I went on hastily:

"I still haven't told you what I came to tell."

"Fire away."

"After a lot of boring talk with Mark about Uncle Paul's Will—he discussed affairs as though he were the lord of the

Manor, you know—I got on my high horse and told him that *I* was Uncle Paul's heiress and that *I* intended to give the orders in future."

"*Muy bien*," whispered Julian, "and then?"

"Then I said that you were *not* to be turned out of this cottage."

Julian's lips and eyes softened.

"Very civil of you. What did he say?"

"That the cottage belongs to him."

"Exactly. He made your uncle sign it away to him."

"Well, I told him that if he turned you out before you had finished your opera, I would pack my bags and go back to Paris—Will or no Will."

Now Julian sat up and stared at me, cigarette between his fingers.

"*Olé!*" he said, using the Spanish cry of victory, which echoes through every bullring in the world when a matador makes a particularly fine move at his bull. "That *does* intrigue me. You really have threatened our friend! He is not used to threats. I personally never had weapons to use. But you have them all. He won't want you to pack up and leave Majorca."

"No, he won't, and he had to climb down and give me his word that you can stay on here," I said triumphantly.

An instant's silence, then Julian said:

"I don't quite know why you have fought Mark on my behalf. I'm astounded and touched. Thanks a lot."

I said nothing. I was confused when he added: "And *why*? Why should you bother about a wreck like myself?"

I looked him straight in the eye.

"Maybe because I don't think you are a wreck. Maybe because I know you are going to compose a marvellous

opera and become just as famous in that way as you would have been if you'd gone on singing."

This time his eyes really did open wide. Once again I saw him shaking with silent laughter. He stubbed his cigarette end in a saucer on the table.

"Really, really! This is quite unexpected, and you must forgive me, my dear girl, if it amuses me."

"I don't think it's funny."

"Sorry," he broke in. "I'm being churlish. But I don't find it easy these days to be grateful for anything. I seem to want to smack out at the world rather than embrace it. But I *am* grateful to you. I'd very much like to be able to stay in my retreat here and go on with my opera, at least until it's finished. It's a huge relief to me."

"So you shall—as long as Mark Jervis minds whether I go back to Paris or not."

"Oh, that will be permanently. I don't doubt he wants to keep you up at the Seventh Cross. I should say his intentions are not necessarily dishonourable but include very personal reasons for wanting you there."

That was the first time that I had even so much as dreamed that my uncle's ex-secretary looked at me *that way*. I felt the blood scorch my cheeks. I burst out indignantly:

"If you're intimating that Mark Jervis means to make a pass at me, or try to marry me, or something like that, he'll have to think again. I *hate* the man."

Julian stretched out his long legs and grinned.

"That makes two of us."

"I'm sure you're wrong about his attitude," I added crossly.

"Don't accuse me of being a flatterer when I remind you you're a very attractive girl, my dear Rune, and going to be

very rich, so he may very well have designs upon you."

"Then I'll tell you *my* designs—I shall ask Mr. Mark Jervis to quit the House of the Seventh Cross just as soon as all the legal formalities are tied up."

I saw Julian's eyebrows go up. Hastily I added:

"Whatever happens I shan't let him turn you out—so you need not have that threat hanging over you."

Julian's brilliant eyes were full now of mingled sardonic humour and surprise:

"My dear Rune, I am staggered by your kindness. But believe me, I won't allow you to sacrifice yourself, or be blackmailed by our friend Jervis just in order to keep a roof over my unworthy head."

"It won't come to that. Forget it," I said.

But I was not sure that I, myself, would forget what Julian had inferred. It certainly put a new complexion on Mark and his attitude toward me. I found it disagreeable.

For the moment, however, I put it out of mind.

"I must go," I said, "but I have one more good piece of news for you."

"And that is—?"

"You are to go up to the house and play the Steinway whenever you want and that means *whenever*. I, for one, shall enjoy it."

I was rewarded by seeing the way Julian's ravaged face lit up.

"Oh, I *say*! That really does lighten my darkness! I've missed that piano like hell. It'll make my work so much easier. I really *am* grateful, Rune. Thanks a lot. Do you mean it? Won't I be taking advantage—?" he stopped and coughed awkwardly.

"I shall enjoy it," I repeated.

"It won't always be as attractive as *The Lover and the Nightingale*. It will be snatches of my own composition."

"That's scarcely a threat. I shall enjoy hearing your opera."

I saw his hazel eyes narrow. He looked at me doubtfully then he shrugged.

"I'll try to believe that—anyway it will be nice to walk into the House of the Seventh Cross as I used to do—in your uncle's time. I didn't much care for being smuggled in by young Anita—bless her small plump self—then chased out with a broom by that witch, Renata."

"There's something odd about her, Julian," I said.

"There's a lot going on up in that house that might be called 'odd', my dear."

I nodded.

"I've felt that ever since I arrived. What with all the mystery and Mark creeping around like an evil spirit, *and* me with a mind like a blank—I haven't been exactly happy."

Now Julian stood up and looked down at me with an expression of genuine sympathy that for a second, at least, wiped the bitterness from his face. I could see the Julian-who-used-to-be. Kind, understanding, charming. But in a flash, it had gone and he was bitter, mocking, again:

"My! my! The poor little rich girl in her palace of treasures, pursued by wicked witches and Senor Jervis, the wickedest wizard of all!"

He chuckled inaudibly. I immediately felt annoyed with him. I snapped:

"I can take care of myself."

"I doubt it."

"Well, I shan't ask *you* to protect me," I said pettishly.

He grinned down at me and bowed.

"Your temper is almost as ragged as mine. But they do say the female of the species is the more deadly."

"Oh, don't be so silly!" I exclaimed.

Now his expression softened again.

"You really are a lovely girl. Your eyes are as blue as gentians when they flash. Run along home, my dear. It's nearly eleven and what the wizard will say when he greets you, I tremble to think. Give me a shout if he threatens to turn you into a bird and trap you into his gilded cage."

My bad mood vanished. I laughed with Julian.

"You have a sweet sense of humour. But let's be serious for one moment. Do you really think there is something sinister about Mark, and this business of the Will? He doesn't seem in a hurry to let me see it."

"Well, if you take my advice," said Julian, "you'll insist on seeing it, and the sooner the better."

He walked up the hill with me and left me at the wrought-iron gates of the Seventh Cross. They were illuminated by two old carriage lamps on the tall posts. I stared at the round, moonlit watch-towers. The bougainvillaea climbing up the walls were a violent magenta in the artificial light. Rather a venomous colour. I suddenly felt that I didn't want to go indoors. I didn't like any of the inmates in this house or trust them. I was really much happier down in that tiny cottage with Julian Marsh—no matter how awkward he could be at times. But at least I could be comforted by the thought that he was not far away.

How awful, I said to myself as I opened the front door, that my only friend in Majorca is a broken-down penniless musician.

I was not surprised to see Mark walk into the hall and

peer angrily at me through his glasses. I had expected it. I made an attempt to pass him with a muttered 'good night' but he stopped me.

"I presume," he said, "that you ignored my warning that you are being foolish to become involved with Julian Marsh."

I held on to the smooth banisters and threw Mark a defiant look.

"If one can't talk to a man or have a cigarette with him, without it being described as 'getting involved', it's *too* absurd."

Mark's cold, light eyes stared at me.

"You're a stranger here, Rune. Perhaps you don't yet know the form. But I don't think it wise of you to visit Julian at eleven o'clock at night."

"Then you must have an evil mind!" I flung at him. "You must be one of those people who see wrong in the most innocent affairs."

The colour rose to his cheeks.

"You're trying to make me angry."

"You've already made *me* angry," I retorted. "You are *not* my keeper. I told you so several times. I know you looked after my uncle very well but I haven't asked you to look after me—neither do I intend to do so in the future, so please stop interfering in my life."

He was furious now. He obviously tried to control himself but failed. He came up and caught both my wrists in a grip that was as painful as it was frightening.

"How dare you treat me like this! How dare you try to ignore my company and take up with that fortune-hunter down the hill? I won't have it. Do you hear—I won't have it!"

I began to struggle. I could feel my face flaming with indignation.

"Let go of me," I said. "Who do you think you are to behave like this? I've told you I choose my own friends and I already look on Julian Marsh as a friend. *You* were my uncle's secretary but that job is over and the moment I establish my position in this house, I shall ask you to leave it."

Now an expression of almost unholy rage reddened Mark's eyes. His veneer of cool dignity cracked. Suddenly he gave a loud, strident laugh which must have been heard all over the house. It was a sound that really froze my blood. He shouted at me:

"That's rich! That's the most comic thing I have ever heard. *You* asking *me* to leave the House of the Seventh Cross. Oh, no, my dear Rune, you are not mistress here yet and if you carry on like this *you never will be.*"

I tore my hands away from his fingers.

"What do you mean by that?"

"You'll see!" he said in the same loud angry voice. "*You'll see!*"

I was about to speak again when suddenly, silently, the housekeeper, Renata, appeared. I presume she had been lingering somewhere behind the door that led into the dining-room, eavesdropping. She didn't look at me but at Mark. There was an expression of some concern on her pallid, hatchet-shaped face. She laid a hand on his arm and spoke to him in rapid Spanish. For a moment he continued to be angry and snarled back at her. They went on talking and arguing. I couldn't understand one word. But his violence seemed to subside. He took off his glasses, wiped them with a trembling hand and replaced them.

Without looking in my direction he rushed up the stairs. I heard a door slam.

I felt decidedly unnerved. His extraordinary outburst of temper seemed so incongruous—so unlike the cold, poised Mark I thought I knew.

I felt that I wanted to go to bed and lock my door. Renata spoke to me—in her usual servile fashion.

"So sorry the senorita has been upset."

"It doesn't matter. Good night, Renata," I said, unwilling to discuss my personal affairs with this woman. But she persisted:

"You do not know, of course, about the Senor Jervis."

"There are a lot of things here I neither know nor understand," I said sharply.

Renata cleared her throat and fingered a silver brooch on her white collar.

"The senorita is shocked because the senor raised his voice."

Nonplussed, I stared at her. She continued, watching me closely with her black slitty eyes:

"The senorita will forgive him when she hears that he is not at all well."

"Is nobody well around here?" I asked, with a nervous laugh.

Renata ignored this.

"He had a bad nervous breakdown after the poor Master died. His whole life was spent in the service of the senor. I trust you will not think me impertinent but I was in service with your uncle long before you were born, senorita. When he lived in Italy I was also with him. He was interested in the Xueta people. My mother was of that blood."

This seemed to me irrelevant and I wasn't interested in Renata's mother or the fact that she was not a pure Mallorquin—nor that she was an elderly, privileged servant. She wasn't as old as all *that*. Forty-ish perhaps—but I had been slightly surprised by the familiarity with which she had laid a hand on Mark's arm; also by the way in which she had managed to subdue him.

She continued to talk to me in her low voice, very politely and carefully, and speaking excellent English. With a touch of humour I decided that I wouldn't be surprised if she didn't tell me that she also had British blood in her veins. I yawned. I was by now extremely tired, but Renata would keep nattering on about the years she had looked after Senor le Motte, and Senor Mark, and how he had broken down at Uncle Paul's funeral and been under a great strain since, settling up the estate. He was not really given to these sudden moods, she said, and meant no harm. He wouldn't hurt a fly. He was kindness itself. And he had been so looking forward to my arrival. He would lay down his life for any relation of the le Mottes, especially for me. And so on, and so on, until I really didn't hear half that Renata was saying. Then I got a word in.

"It's quite all right, Renata. Thanks for explaining. And now, good night again."

"Please, senorita, do not be unfriendly to Senor Jervis," she pleaded.

"I can't think what it's all got to do with you—" I began, but broke off, deciding that this was a waste of time. I was sick of Renata. I couldn't understand anything that was going on and I gave up trying. I just assured Renata that I would excuse Senor Jervis's outburst, then turned my back on the woman and went off to my own room.

But I could feel rather than see her dark cunning gaze following me. And once I was alone behind my closed door I felt no more happy, secure or content with the state of affairs in the House of the Seventh Cross than I had been before. Rather less.

10

I SLEPT well and woke to find Renata at the usual hour opening my shutters, having already placed my breakfast tray by my bed.

"*Buenos dias, senorita,*" she said with that smile that she meant to be pleasant but looked to me more like a sneer.

"*Buenos,*" I replied and sat up, yawning.

"The day is perfect," she said.

I blinked; sure enough the sun was pouring in from a sky of dazzling blue. As Renata started to close the shutters again, I stopped her.

"You know I like the sun—don't shut it out."

She shrugged. She dare not argue this point again. I had already come to grips with her about the sunlight.

I felt quite strong this morning—fully recovered from my accident—except for my memory. I decided to take Julian's advice and stop troubling myself on that score. I had won a victory over Mark Jervis and discovered his weakness. He couldn't hurt me, I decided. He couldn't force me to do anything that I didn't want to—I felt that he was just trying to abuse his power as an Executor because he had been Uncle Paul's right hand in the past. Whether his violent tempers were really the result of a nervous breakdown or not, I didn't care. Julian Marsh was there—just down the hill—and he was coming up to play the piano, *my* piano. That would be marvellous. I was glad I'd fixed it and I began at last to be thrilled by the prospect of inheriting all

this wealth and beauty—all these treasures—as mistress of the Seventh Cross.

As I was finishing my coffee, rolls and honey, I heard Renata's sharp voice, then Anita, whining an apology. Renata was bullying the poor little maid again.

Later, the housekeeper came in and handed me a letter.

I thought she looked a trifle worried and more furtive than usual. She said:

"From Senor Mark. He has already left home—driving to Palma Airport."

I must have looked pleased because Renata scowled at me and tossed her head as she left the room.

I opened the note. It was as evasive as everything else Mark Jervis had said or done since I came to the island.

"*Dear Rune,*

I apologise for last night. I'm afraid I was overwrought. There has been a lot on my mind and everything has been getting on top of me. I hope you will understand. My concern for you is genuine but soon you will understand more about that. I have to go to Barcelona on business. The reason why Senor Iturrbo has not been to see you before is because he is hung up in his office there on an urgent case. So I have gone to talk to him and hurry him up on your behalf. I will be back on Saturday.

Yours with all sincerity,

Mark."

I lay back on my pillow, reflecting. I didn't quite like that line about me *understanding more about Mark's concern.* What *was* it all about? Julian had suggested that Mark's attitude toward me was not dishonourable, but *was* he interested in me as a woman as well as Uncle Paul's heiress? Surely not.

He was just an upstart, an opportunist. I was afraid my old uncle had been sadly mistaken in him. It is easy to misjudge people as you grow old. No doubt you get tired and sleepy and used to certain people being with you. If they serve you well, you don't look too closely into their conduct or motives. By all accounts Mark had been very attentive to my uncle and spared him much unnecessary trouble in all matters. But Uncle Paul could not have known the real Mark as I was beginning to know him—a queer cold fish, if there ever was one; vindictive—producing another rather more turbulent side, too.

However, as he had taken the trouble to fly to Barcelona and hurry the legal formalities on for me, it showed that he had some understanding of my feelings. I only wished I had seen him before he left—I would have asked him to make sure he brought back a copy of the Will to show me. Somehow I felt in my bones that he wouldn't; that there was something in it he really did not want me to see. Later, as I tore up his note, I remembered that Mark would be away for two whole days. At once the House of the Seventh Cross assumed a less heavy, oppressive atmosphere. I began to feel delightfully free and cheerful. My thoughts turned to Julian Marsh.

I dressed quickly, choosing a short white skirt which barely reached my knees—nice for a hot day and a low-necked, sleeveless T-shirt. I looked at my face and found it much improved—pink cheeks, bright eyes, the old lustre creeping back into my long fair hair. I giggled at my reflection, because I really looked so young. I might have been sixteen. I really felt a bit childish, so pleased with life this morning.

In one of the dressing-table drawers which I had not yet

thoroughly inspected, I now found a blue leather jewel case bearing my initials, R. *le M.* I remembered seeing a tiny key in the beautiful tapestry and leather bag which they said I had been clutching when they found me in the wrecked car. With this key I opened the case. It seemed rather empty except for a diamond and enamelled watch, a single pearl ring, an old-fashioned garnet necklace which, I imagined, must have belonged to my mother or grandmother; twisted gold with bracelet to match. Then one brooch which looked of real value, and which attracted my attention. It was shaped like a large flower. The stamens and the corolla were of fine sapphires set in delicate gold leaves.

I picked this up slowly and stared at it. My happiness turned to a sudden foreboding; almost to a feeling of suffocation—of fear—as my mind began to whirl—to twist this way and that. I trembled so much that I had to sit down. I stared at the beautiful gold flower.

Where had I seen this brooch before?

Then as through a rolling mist, I saw it clearly once again, not in my shaking fingers but on the lapel of a girl's linen suit. (A yellow suit). The girl's face was mine—*yet not mine.* And although the brooch was the same, the stamens and corolla were green instead of darkly blue.

My throat dried up. I would have fainted if I hadn't made an effort and pulled myself together. I gasped aloud:

"What does it mean? Who is the girl in yellow? She must have been me. Yet I haven't got a yellow suit. There isn't one in my wardrobe. I know all the clothes there now. And the brooch with the emeralds—that isn't in the jewel-case!"

I dropped the brooch on the bed and covered my face with my trembling hands.

"*Think, think, Rune. Think and remember,*" I groaned the words aloud.

But once again I came up against a black wall. As before, just as I thought I was grasping something concrete, I found it was only straw, and it disintegrated. I actually began to cry. It was one of those nervous crises that I had suffered from since my accident; like the moment when I thought I remembered having seen the signet ring Mark usually wore. Yet even that memory had ended in smoke. I knew no more about my past than I had done before.

My tears continued to fall. I was crying like a frustrated child when suddenly the silence of the exquisite Majorcan morning was broken by the sound of music . . . the Steinway down in the salon was being played. And it was *The Lover and the Nightingale.*

Julian was here! Julian was playing what had become my 'theme song'. Immediately I stopped crying. My spirits rose again. I put the sapphire and gold brooch back into the case. I pushed my thick tumbling hair back from my forehead with a white Alice band and ran downstairs.

Renata was passing the bottom of the staircase carrying a tray. She looked up at me, jerking her head in the direction of the salon.

"Do you hear, senorita? What a nerve! To dare to disobey orders and come into this house—I shall turn him out—" she began.

I soon put an end to *that.*

"Renata," I said in my iciest voice, "you will be so good as to remember that I am my uncle's heiress, and more mistress of this house now than Mr. Jervis is master. You will take my orders in future."

I saw her mouth open wide, and her jaw drop with astonishment.

"The first of these orders," I went on, "is that Mr. Julian is to come here and play that piano whensoever he wishes. You will *not* turn him out."

I did not wait to see the reaction from the astonished housekeeper. I walked into the salon. My mental confusion and distress over the brooch and that vague memory of myself—(yet not me) wearing a yellow suit, were forgotten.

Julian had stopped playing the glorious lyrical music of Granados. He was on another theme. Something new to me, and captivating.

As I advanced toward the piano, he looked up. He seemed quite a familiar figure now in his old, faded blue jeans. This morning he wore a freshly-ironed blue and white check shirt. The rough chestnut hair curled over his head rather like a Roman Emperor's, I thought, and looked damp as though he had just been swimming which, in fact, he had. His opening words explained:

"Good morning, Rune. Hope I'm not too early. You should have heard Renata screeching at me about waking you up, but our little friend, Anita, inadvertently gave the show away by telling me that you had already breakfasted and were having your bath—when I arrived. I have just come out of the swimming pool at Santa Valencia."

"Where's that?" I asked.

"The big white house above the Calvario, and just below the Monastery. The one owned by the American widow, Mrs. Della Carmichael. She is away at the moment. You remember I work in her garden sometimes. She allows me to use her swimming pool but I never go there when she

is at home. As you know, I'm anti-social and she always has a flood of guests."

I nodded. Julian began to play again.

"This is the love-motive of my opera," he whispered without looking at me. "I'll tell you the story some time. This morning I want to work on this duet."

"Would you rather I did not stay?" I asked, humbly.

As I hoped, he gave me permission.

"You like and understand music. You won't upset me. Just don't talk."

"I wouldn't dream of it," I said indignantly.

And I sat down on the sofa at the other end of the room, lit my first cigarette of the day and listened and watched.

I was fascinated by the look of concentration on Julian's thin face. With those hollowed cheeks, and fine sunken eyes, and that look of suffering—his face was in a curious way as beautiful as an old painting. If he had a beard—he would have looked like one of the Disciples, I thought.

He played the piano beautifully but there was no question now of him showing off as a pianist. He was all composer. Brows drawn together, lips set, he marked his score from time to time, then played another chord, another stanza; then the whole. Then he began again.

This was how a composer worked; it intrigued me. I sat absolutely still, listening. I could not have been more glad that I had fought Mark and gained for Julian the right to come here and play. It was obvious that the composition of this opera—his opera—was everything to him now. It meant his life—his whole future. It might one day mean that he would no longer need to care whether his voice could be heard, or whether he would for ever stay silent. His opera would speak to the world for him.

He must have been working for an hour before he seemed to become aware of my presence again. And that, I felt sure, was only because Renata marched in with a tray and *one* cup of coffee which she presented to me.

The spell was broken.

Julian stopped playing, leaned his folded arms on the piano and grinned at me, cynically. I saw Renata glower at him. I said:

"Another cup of coffee for the senor, please, Renata."

Without speaking, she turned and marched out of the salon.

Julian said something but I was too far away to hear it. I drew nearer the piano.

"If looks could kill," I began to giggle.

"Did you see her face?" he asked huskily.

"I did."

"If that coffee ever comes for me, I'll realise how completely you are revolutionising life at the Seventh Cross," he whispered.

The second cup of coffee actually came. Renata's face was livid but I took it for granted that she had had her orders from Mark as well as from me. Whatever she personally felt about Julian she had been told to do what *I* wanted.

I had hoped for some conversation with Julian but he said only a few words while he sipped the strong Spanish coffee which he took black and with a lot of sugar. Then he returned to the piano.

I sat listening to him, entranced, for another hour. By this time I had closed the shutters to keep out the burning sunlight. The salon was dim and not too hot. Suddenly Julian threw down pencil and a sheet of music on to the floor.

"Oh, damn, damn!" he muttered. "It isn't right."

As he stooped to pick the music up again, I feared he was going to destroy it. I rushed and grabbed it, first.

"I am sure it isn't as wrong as all that—oh, please, please, don't tear it up!"

For a moment his brilliant eyes glared at me, then softened. He gave his soundless chuckle. The thin lean body shook.

"You are a strange girl, I must say. All right, I won't tear it up but I'll have to re-write the end of that duet. It sounded much too corny."

"I thought it was beautiful."

"Did you?" his eyes opened wide now. "Did you really?"

"Yes."

"All females are sentimentalists at heart."

"That's contradictory to your other statement that they are the deadly ones of the species."

He grinned, got up, and began to walk up and down the long salon, hands dug in the pockets of his jeans.

"So you remember that."

"Yes," I said, rather forlornly, "I remember all the things that have *just* happened, but nothing long ago."

"Amnesia is a queer thing, Rune. I had a pal years ago who was smashed up on the Autostrada between Rome and Milan, doing a crazy pace. When he first recovered consciousness he had not only forgotten who he was—he treated me like a stranger when I visited him—but he couldn't even remember how to read or write. They had to teach him as though he was a child –from scratch."

"I'm not as bad as that. I just seem to have forgotten names and places—my own identity. And I remember nothing of the accident whatever."

"Even if you recover you are not likely to recall a single thing about the crash."

"You seem to know such a lot about amnesia."

"Because of my friend."

"And did he recover, completely, in time?" I asked, hopefully.

Julian stopped and looked down at me.

"Yes—after a long period. The brain's funny that way— it can play astounding tricks. But I have every hope that yours is not a case of total amnesia. Already you are beginning to remember the past a little—you said so."

My heart beat painfully. I felt disturbed as I always did when I tried to recall the past. I was happiest when I was just being Rune le Motte, without questioning the fact. Suddenly I began to confide in Julian. I told him about the signet ring that Mark was wearing, then about the brooch I had found in my jewel case this morning.

He seemed quite interested.

"Queer! To remember the crest on the ring—a yellow suit which you haven't got with you—and a brooch with different stones from the ones you *think* you had."

"Yes—I just don't understand it," I said, helplessly.

"Aren't you going to get in touch with any of the people who knew you in Paris and might help you?"

"Yes, I am going to telephone my father's solicitor. I've only been waiting to see the Will so that I can discuss business and kill two birds with one stone."

Julian nodded. I went on:

"I've already sent them one letter."

"You found it possible to write?"

"Yes," I said, confusedly. "Although, as I told you, my

signature didn't altogether conform with the one on my original letters to Mark."

"That's nothing," said Julian, "My friend couldn't write at all. He had to learn the whole thing from A to Z."

"But I haven't had to be taught to walk or eat or do my hair or any of these silly things."

"No—as I told you, you are not a bad case, and I reckon your memory will go on returning bit by bit now. So don't be depressed."

"I'm not!" I declared. "But I want to know more about the Rune I used to be, I assure you. I want to be able to identify myself and not feel so disembodied."

And suddenly, stupidly, tears welled into my eyes and dripped down my cheeks. There I was, sitting on the edge of the sofa, weeping, which was the last thing in the world I wanted to do in front of Julian Marsh.

To my astonishment, the embittered cynic became kindness itself. He came over and took one of my hands, pressing it between both of his. He looked at me as though genuinely upset by the sight of my tears.

"Oh, look here, don't cry, don't worry about your present state," he whispered. "There's no need to be miserable. You'll be all right in time. Cheer up. I hate to see you cry."

Much to my anger, I cried harder than ever. Soon Julian was sitting beside me, one arm around my shoulders, and I was snivelling into a big handkerchief—the silk handkerchief he usually knotted around his neck. But it was clean and smelt faintly of tobacco.

He whispered words of comfort. He told me that he had been through such hell himself lately, he understood how

deeply one could be affected by physical ailments or disabilities, and that he was immensely sorry for me. And, like everybody else, he kept warning me not to strain my memory, because that was bad for me.

Suddenly I felt blissfully happy. It was astonishingly warm and comforting in the curve of Julian's arm. His sympathy—a complete reversal of the difficult harsh Julian he normally seemed—overwhelmed me. I had been feeling so abjectly lonely and (I had to confess it) so disturbed by all that had been going on in this house, I felt I had never needed a friend so much. I also had to confess to myself that Julian's nearness did not altogether produce platonic sentiments in me. I was physically disturbed—startlingly so. I leaned against him with my full weight. I felt his arm tighten around me. With his other hand he began to smooth the tumbled hair back from my hot, damp face. He whispered:

"Poor pet—what a shame! And you're so beautiful and so good to me. I can't bear you to cry."

He went on stroking my hair. I shut my eyes.

I was not yet prepared to sit up and pretend to be in command of myself again. Without shame, I admit I took full advantage of this moment. I found Julian the most fascinating man on earth. I looked up into those extraordinary eyes of his and felt as though I was swimming in a great shining lake, dazzled by the sun. My lips parted. I don't know what he thought but I know what he *felt* because he, too, seemed overcome by this sudden moment of intimacy. He kissed me. As his lips touched my mouth I responded, and we clung together like lovers, passionately in love.

Of course it was only a moment of madness, of illusion, and later I was going to feel both ashamed and alarmed at

myself for ever having surrendered to that kiss. But now I felt completely in love with him.

I breathed his name:

"*Julian!*"

"Rune," his voice murmured hoarsely against my ear. I could feel his tall, lean body shaking. With a forefinger he traced the outline of my eyes, my lips, then my throat. "Rune—what is happening to us? We're strangers. We don't know each other. Why do we feel like this?"

It was a question that I did not answer. I was incapable of it. I couldn't have told anybody whether I had ever before been held or kissed in this manner. It roused no memories of the past. It only told me that I was no icicle, that I was hopelessly impulsive, and that my instincts were all to love and be loved—and in particular by this man. He went on whispering:

"You are so very lovely and gentle and kind to me. And I've been so afraid for you ever since I met you. I don't like you being in this damned house. It was a wonderful house—when Paul le Motte was alive. Now it's become evil. I don't trust Mark Jervis. I don't like the idea of you living here under the same roof with him. But I have no control over your life. And God knows I've no right to make love to you. Forgive me, please forgive me. It is no way to return your generosity in letting me play the piano."

Now he released me gently and stood up. Choked, speechless, I handed him back his handkerchief. He wiped his lips with it. I was amazed to find that I was thrilled by the sight of my pale pink lipstick smearing the corner of his mouth. He rubbed it away and I was sorry. I was conscious of being all primitive woman, at this moment—unashamed

of the fact that I had so madly kissed a 'stranger' as he called himself.

Then he turned and looked down at me. He was once more aloof and ready to debunk the sentimental moment.

"How crazy can we get? Do say you forgive me. There's some kind of magic about you, Rune. I had no right to take advantage of it."

I glanced up at him, feeling my eyes hot and bright.

"Please don't apologise. It was quite mutual."

"Was it?" he asked, in surprise.

"Quite," I said.

I thought he looked rather baffled but he turned his back on me and went toward the piano again.

"I didn't know I could be so weak. And I thought I had better manners. I really am sorry."

"It wasn't a question of manners. Do stop being pompous and don't apologise," I exclaimed, springing to my feet. I could see that he no longer looked at me with desire —with eyes that could drown sanity, caution—everything, in the white heat of passion. He grinned. Humour and reason were restored.

"Don't worry, my dear. We were both a little off guard. You're very sweet and I'm grateful for your friendship. Don't take it away."

"I won't!" I said with a hysterical laugh, "but forgive me if I buzz off now. I've decided to try and get a 'phone call through to Paris—to the solicitor. I just feel I don't want to wait for Mark to come back."

Julian sat down and began to play again. This time the music had nothing to do with his opera. It was a Sonata by Prokofiev. Whatever had happened, my memory concerning music seemed excellent. Yes, I had played that Sonata

myself, at a concert at home. *La Menor*. A fascinating, unique composition. I used to adore Prokofiev.

When did I play it? Where was home? In Paris presumably.

The old horror of lost memory overwhelmed me, blotting out the glorious thrill of that moment with Julian which he had called 'unguarded'.

I ran out of the salon, bursting into tears again.

II

FOR a short time I lay face downwards on my bed listening to the muffled sound of Julian's music—he must have gone on playing the piano for about half-an-hour.

I thought:

How different men are from women—I can't think of anything but the way he kissed me and how I felt about it. He's just going on with his beastly music—he doesn't care a bit.

And then I laughed through my tears and another thought followed:

Why should he care? I don't, either. It was all crazy. And the music isn't beastly. It's wonderful. I can imagine how wonderful—with a tenor and a soprano in that duet. It'll be sensational.

Suddenly I sat up, my tears drying, and rushed to my dressing-table, made up my face and rushed downstairs and into the salon again. I faced Julian defiantly. He was just shutting the lid of the piano.

"I want to see if I can play," I said breathlessly, "I haven't tried. I don't know if I can."

He looked amused—if a trifle surprised.

"Fire away. I'd like to hear if you really can play, too."

I was shivering as I sat down on that piano stool. It was as though I was trying to carve a fragment of the past out of nothingness, and make it into a concrete shape.

I set my teeth. My brain whirled. I didn't really know why I had run down here like this so suddenly. Some kind of force had impelled me to do so.

For a few seconds my fingers seemed wooden and ineffectual as though I knew nothing about those ivory and black keys. Nothing at all. I stumbled over the chords. I played discords. I made a mess of the whole thing. I looked up at Julian and gasped:

"I can't. *Oh, I can't!*"

He came up and stood behind me, placing both hands on my shoulders.

"Steady, Rune—steady!" he whispered the words against my hair. "I believe that you can. Something about the way that you put your hands on the keyboard tells me so—your wrists are flexible and those long slim fingers of yours reach quite instinctively for an octave. You *can* play, my dear. Once you said you remembered that you could, so you *can*."

I gritted my teeth. I felt more angry with myself than with Julian.

"I can't—I can't—" I began again and rather rudely took his two strong hands and pushed them off my shoulders. But his voice went on whispering:

"Go on. Play to me, Rune. *Play*—"

Suddenly it was as though that idea in my head took shape and rose gracefully out of the fog. I began to play. I faltered at first like a child, unsure of itself, but with every second my self-confidence grew. Strange to say I remembered a little haunting melody that somebody must have taught me. A nostalgic memory.

Who? Then he, too, took shape. He had a beard and wore thick-lensed glasses. Through my brain there flashed the word: *Professor. Professor Swingli.* He was Swiss. He taught music in Bristol. *Bristol!* Another strange memory. But why Bristol? Why should Rune le Motte, late of Paris, know anything about Bristol?

I felt nervous yet exhilarated, almost as though I had drunk a long draught of iced champagne. *I remember . . . I remember*, I said to myself, and began to laugh and to add on a few words from a childish poem. No, not childish. Adult. A famous verse by Thomas Hood (Children all over the world learned it): 'I remember, I remember, the house where I was born'.

That was how the poem began.

Who had taught it to me? And in what house had *I* been born? In Paris? In Bristol? Oh, God! this awful half awareness of the truth; this lifting of the veil only to see it fall again between me and the knowledge I craved so frantically.

I went on playing, and I knew now that I was playing well. Julian's voice whispered:

"There! I told you so. That's an enchanting Russian folk song—*The Red Sarafan*—I forget who by, but it's charming. You play with feeling, Rune. I like your touch. This is great —so good to hear. I'm so glad that you can play."

My fingers fell away from the keyboard. I covered my face with my hands, near to tears again.

Julian was extraordinarily gentle and understanding of my confusion. He was a fabulous man, I thought. He pulled me up from the stool and, with an arm through mine, led me away from the piano toward the door.

"That's enough. We've both had enough music for one morning. You look a bit shaken, my poor child. Come out into the sunlight. Shall I take you up to the swimming pool? Would you like to swim?"

"No, thank you," I said, struggling with the urge to cry.

"Then let's walk."

But another brighter idea suddenly struck me.

"No. Let's order my car. I own a car, you know. A

replacement of the one that was in the accident. You can take me right away from this house—from Renata—everybody—down to the Puerto de Pollensa to see the sea."

"Who'll drive?" he asked as we walked through the front doorway on to the flower-filled sunny terrace.

The hysteria in me subsided. I felt better and I managed to smile.

"I suppose I could. I must have been able to once. I was driving when I had that accident, so they said."

"You're certainly not fit to drive today."

"And you?"

"Oh, I can tackle any car. I've driven all kinds in the old days. I have no nerves on that score. Your car is one of those expensive Renaults, I believe."

"You know everything, Julian."

"Rumours abound in Pollensa," he shrugged.

"Wait," I said, "I'll ask Mark's gardener-chauffeur to bring round the Renault. Then I'll get some sun-glasses and a bag, and cancel my lunch here and we'll lunch out. You can drive."

"It sounds fascinating," Julian tucked his portfolio under one arm. "But I have no chic clothes, you know, I pawned every good suit I used to possess. Do you mind being driven around by a shabby beggar?"

I took no notice of this.

"Wait for me," I said breathlessly.

And I knew that I wanted more than anything in the world to be driven away from the House of the Seventh Cross by Julian Marsh.

Renata tried to stop me. She began by protesting when I told her to have the car brought round to me.

She flung up her hands in horror.

"You cannot drive yourself, senorita. The senor would be extremely concerned—"

"What I choose to do has nothing to do with the senor," I broke in coolly, "and I wish you'd get this into your head." Then I added with rather a mischievous look at her: "Mr. Marsh will drive me."

The red blood coloured the woman's greenish pale face. She looked positively shocked. She made one more effort to say that I must not go but I think I finally impressed it upon her that I was not an invalid any more nor a helpless child to be told what or what not to do. She caved in and departed, muttering.

The driver who used to look after my uncle's big car delivered the new Renault outside the wrought-iron gates. Julian opened the door for me.

"Pretty sleek," he whispered.

I agreed. I felt proud of my car. Sleek was the word. It was beautiful. Such was the power of money, I thought. Before getting into the car I stared hard at it. Those two tones of grey, the silver bonnet, the white leather seats—were familiar in one way—yet not in another. Had I ever driven such a car? *Could* I drive?

"Julian—let me take the wheel—" I began.

But Julian obviously had strong views about a girl who did not know whether she could drive or not taking this gorgeous Renault down a steep hill. He shook his head firmly. The next moment he was in the driver's seat and had switched on the engine. I settled back in the car feeling blissfully happy. I didn't look back at the house although I was sure Renata was leaning out of one of the upper windows, glaring. I even guessed that as soon as I had gone she would put a telephone call through to Barcelona and tell

dear Mark what went on. I was more sure than ever that she was a paid spy, although what she was spying for, heaven knew.

Once he got the feel of the gears, Julian drove well and easily. Just as well I felt confidence in him. It was a hair-raising descent. Down, down, past the tall, stone crosses, around those dangerous hairpin bends. At one turning he had to stop, back, and turn again in order not to drive straight over the edge. It was a sheer drop from the roadway; no wall to safeguard the descent.

He leant toward me and whispered:

"Nervous?"

"Not a bit. Drive on!" I said dramatically.

The sun was hot and the blue sky glorious. I adored the red peppers hanging drying, on the white walls, of some of the cottages. When we entered the little straggling town of Pollensa, where they were only just beginning to dig trenches for a new water-supply, and which seemed to have escaped much modernism, I was enchanted. The narrow cobbled streets were dark and cool, shaded from the sun by the houses on either side. One or two cars with English or American occupants passed by. A couple of donkeys, their panniers stuffed with fresh-picked almonds, stood by the little fountain in the square. Through the open windows of the car there drifted the local odour of oil and garlic and wine. To me, all very exciting.

Many of the young men and women, small children clinging to their skirts, were standing outside their doors chatting and smoking. They all seemed to know Julian because they smiled and waved at him and he waved back.

"They're friendly to me," was his comment, "because I haven't any money but I speak their language and sometimes

I go to their cafés and play their pianos for private festivities."

I sighed. I thought it sad that the great musician should have to do that, but it put another light on his character. When you live in a village, and the villagers like you, you're all right. That's what Peter used to say.

Who was Peter? The name had sprung unbidden to my mind. *Oh, God, who was Peter?*

It was like another news-flash from the past rather than the present. I had to take a grip on myself because my heart started to beat so fast. Never mind who Peter was or what village he came from! Never mind anything but today in the hot sunlight sitting in this marvellous car which belonged to me, beside a marvellous man who wore ragged jeans and hadn't a peseta in his pocket, and who was a splendid, amusing companion.

We came out on to the main road again, and turned right to Puerto Pollensa.

"You'll be disappointed in the place," Julian warned me. "It's for the tourists."

He was right. It was a pretty little town with gay shops all along the boulevard, but far too crowded. Boats bobbed in the harbour. Some swimmers splashed in the shining sea —others lay sunbathing on the narrow pebbly beach. A motor-boat dashed through the blue water, followed by a gay girl on water-skis. Across the other side were the shops and a long line of cafés. The new, smart *Daina Hotel*; *The Six-Pins*—rather attractive I thought; Peppi's *Iru Bar* and crowds of people sitting at the little tables under striped awnings, drinking their aperitifs and coffees.

Julian drove me on to the Cala San Vicente where there was a quieter beach on a creek, overlooked by craggy

mountains. The colouring was breath-taking—violet-blue, yellowish-green, contrasting with the black shadow of the pine woods, and the silver-grey ash green of the fascinating olive-trees.

"Oh, I'm beginning to adore Majorca!" I cried.

"Clap your hands," said Julian in his husky whisper, followed by a laugh, "then you'll really look like a child being taken out for the day."

"It is exactly how I feel," I said breathlessly, and somehow I felt it was wonderful to have left the Calvario and all that the House of the Seventh Cross and Mark Jervis stood for, well behind us.

We stopped at a grocer's shop and bought a long twisted loaf of bread, excellent ham, and a piece of strong Spanish cheese. Also a bottle of cheap red wine, chosen by Julian. He insisted on paying for it all. He had just enough money, he said, and nothing that I could say induced him to let me contribute.

"You're lunching on me, Miss le Motte," he said. "I only wish I could take you to a smart restaurant so that you could sit like the splendid lady you are—owner of a splendid car."

"Rubbish. I prefer it this way," I said.

"I think I believe you."

"Thanks," I laughed back. "And where do we eat our picnic?"

"Is the truant willing to stay out all day?"

"Yes," I said, tossing my head.

"Okay," he said and drove me away from the tourist centre and the crowded beaches. It was too hot by the sea for a picnic. Julian raced the Renault up the mountains—up, up, away from the Bay of Pollensa, along the zig-zag curving road that leads to Formentor, on the other side of the island

It was an exhilarating drive, especially when I glanced behind me, way down at Pollensa. All the little houses and outlying farms began to look like dots on the landscape. We were a long way up. Soon we reached a wonderful road flanked by great jagged rocks, grey, lichen-covered, interspersed with tiny wild flowers. Between the boulders stood the huge cacti, with the pinky-orange fruit of the season hanging from their pointed sword-like branches. I loved the dark cypress trees, the dwarf pines, the olives with leaves as grey as the stones. Above all I adored the hot blue of the sky. When we reached the top of the steep hill, Julian drew the Renault into the side.

"Here," he said, "let's eat under those trees over there. It'll be cool."

I got out. Shading my eyes with one hand, I looked across the plateau at the fascinating semi-circles of sea, miles below us along the coastline. Sea and sky seemed to merge in one brilliant blue wash of colour.

It was intoxicating, I thought. I stretched my arms and threw back my head.

"Ooh! Majorca, I love you!"

"You're full of feeling, aren't you?" Julian murmured and drew me down on to the warm grass; more scrub than grass, perhaps. I leaned my back against a tree. Julian pointed out the asphodels and the wild asparagus that grew up here. I watched the yellow butterflies chasing each other across the sun-baked stones. I was particularly fascinated by tiny, graceful yellow birds flying around close to us. Julian told me that they were wild canaries. This was their breeding ground.

He had so many things to tell me. I shut my eyes and listened, fascinated, to his whispering voice. I was in a lazy,

hazy sort of mood that was infinitely soothing. I completely forgot Mark or my apprehensions about the House of the Seventh Cross.

Julian said:

"There are all kinds of places I'd like to take you to, Rune. To Lluch Monastery, for instance—it's so beautiful there in the heart of the green valley. I could show you the Virgin's Shrine—*La Moreneta*. They say that miracles have taken place there and many prayers have been answered."

"Have you been there to pray?" I asked.

He gave his husky laugh.

"I don't believe in miracles."

"*I* do, Julian."

"Then, my dear, I must certainly take you to pray at the Shrine. There perhaps you will remember everything you have now forgotten."

I whispered:

"Sometimes I wonder if it will be a good thing, or if I could be as happy as I am at this moment."

"Are you so happy?"

"Yes," I answered breathlessly and opened my eyes. Through a dazzle of sunshine I saw Julian's lean, brown face bending above mine. Suddenly without warning he kissed me on the lips.

"Do you know that I'm beginning to find you much too attractive?" he whispered.

A shiver went through my whole body.

"I feel the same about you but, of course, it's ridiculous."

"Yes, we're strangers."

"Not any more," I said almost pleadingly.

"Very well—not any more," repeated Julian and put both arms around my waist and drew me close and kissed me

again. This time I felt a sudden blinding ecstasy—a wild sweet warmth in all my limbs—in my mind—my whole being—such as I had never known before or believed possible. I put one arm around his neck and with my other hand traced the outline of his fine-boned face.

"Julian," I said in the strangest voice and I must admit that I felt strange—and not a little mad, "Oh, *Julian*!"

"Rune!" He whispered the name as though he relished it. It had never sounded lovelier or belonged more absolutely to me. The hard blue sky and the sun and the glorious panorama of the Majorcan mountainside leading down to the coast were blotted out. I saw only the hunger in his eyes and felt nothing but the tenderness of his hands, and his fingers spreading through my long hair.

"Rune, Rune, Rune—" he kept saying.

He kissed my mouth again. This time with a passion that shook me. We were locked for a moment in a glorious embrace. He touched my hair, my throat, my breasts. But suddenly drew away and sprang to his feet, his breath coming fast, his expression half-astonished, half-afraid. Yes, I could see that he was afraid of this sudden passion that had momentarily overwhelmed him—and me. He said:

"I must be off my head. Are you very angry?"

I, too, stood up but my knees felt wobbly and I shook like a leaf in the wind. I tried to laugh.

"Did I *seem* angry?"

His large luminous eyes held mine as though spellbound.

"No, no, you seemed not to mind."

"Much more than that, Julian, I think I'm in love with you."

"But you can't be. You don't really *know* me."

"You have just agreed that we are not strangers any more."

He took my hands and kissed each one in turn.

"God, darling, you're marvellous! You're the most marvellous girl I ever met. You've got everything. Beauty, brains, music, *the lot*. I never used to believe in sudden love; I've always thought this sort of thing just an expression of mutual physical appeal. But I felt so much more for you just now when I kissed you. So much more."

"So did I," I said, and swayed rather drunkenly, holding hard on to his hands, wondering if I had sunstroke or if it was just that I was truly hopelessly in love with this man.

"But you happen to be Rune le Motte, an heiress, and I'm a penniless composer without a voice," came his hoarse whisper. The brown face creased. There was pain in his eyes, pain and bitterness in the curve of his mouth.

"And I don't know who I am even though they say that I am Rune le Motte," I said.

"You *are* Rune le Motte. And I can never possibly play a part in your life."

"Don't say that, Julian. I won't listen."

He stared at me incredulously.

"Are you being serious? Are you trying to tell me that you are serious about me?"

I suppose I should have waited to probe into my emotions and thoughts and dwelt more calmly on the fantastic situation that had arisen with such alarming suddenness between Julian and myself. But I didn't. Nor did I seem to mind about anything except being in his arms. I really was a little crazy. So, when he turned his back to me and began to walk away, I ran after him in the most brazen fashion and pulled him back.

"You're not to leave me. You're not to run away!"

At once he swung round, caught hold of me and buried his face in my hair.

"Don't you realise that I've got to? I'm madly in love with you. You're the *first*—the only one I've felt this way about. I think I knew it when you walked into my cottage that day and I watched you while I played my record to you. It immediately became our theme song."

"I felt the same, too," I said, and tears of joy blinded my eyes. I sobbed against his shoulder. "Oh, *Julian*, I'm so happy."

He took my arm and led me back to the trees and pulled me down on to the warm ground again. There we lay, very close, our arms around each other—acknowledged lovers. We had become lovers, I thought dizzily. It was the most stupendous thing. It was the miracle of *La Moreneta*. A miracle I hadn't even prayed for. I felt drunk with happiness, and when he kissed my lips, they opened to receive the kiss. I reached up and pulled his head down and embraced him in an almost solemn, dedicated way; we were gentle lovers. We kissed each other's hands. We looked wonderingly at each other as though we couldn't believe what we saw, or how we felt. But gradually the old bitter humour returned to Julian. He moved away from me and pulled the big paper bag containing our picnic lunch nearer to us.

"I want my lunch," he said grimly, lips twisted into a smile. "Come on, darling. This has got to stop. You lovely, crazy girl—am I a man or a mouse? Believe me—if I'm a man, I'll keep you in my arms and prove it. So I'd better be a mouse, and scamper away from you. Once or twice in my life I've made love to a woman but not with a girl like you.

You've shown me that physical passion is as nothing compared with the mental—the spiritual—side. Physical love can be selfish and degrading. But for you, Rune, I feel *love*. Oh, Rune, my dear, let us keep our heads. *Oh, hell*, I'm hungry—let's eat our lunch," he ended savagely. And he tore at the paper bag until bread and butter and ham all rolled out on the grass.

Then we both started to laugh uproariously. I gathered up the food and with the long crisp loaf, I struck him lightly across his rough, handsome head.

"Hateful, masculine, down-to-earth, *horrible* Julian!"

He grabbed the loaf from me, caught my hand and hit me over the palm of my hand until I yelled.

"You're hurting me."

"You deserve it."

I laughed and laughed and threw my arms up above my head and shut my eyes. The tears of passion and love and feeling were dried up by the hot Spanish sun. I shouted aloud:

"Julian! Julian! Now I know what it is to be really happy and alive. Oh, what *fun* it all is!"

"Yes," said Julian, and hugged me, and covered my face with little special kisses. "Fun to be with you, to love and be loved by you, my darling."

"Are you sure I'm your darling?"

"Not at all sure, or that you can ever be mine in any way except as a friend. But I won't start a discussion on that subject now. It's too complicated and would spoil our day together. We're happy up here alone on the mountainside. To hell with everything else."

"To hell with everything else," I repeated recklessly and added: "But don't ever leave me, Julian. Oh, darling, stay

near me. I'm so afraid of the House of the Seventh Cross and of everyone in it."

Suddenly he grew serious.

"Sometimes I'm afraid too."

"Look after me," I said, full of stupid self-pity, and with intense longing for his nearness, his reassurance. He had become the only real thing now in my unreal life.

"I will—I swear it," he said.

"Then I'll let you have your lunch now," I giggled softly.

So we devoured our simple, delicious picnic and drank the cheap red wine out of the bottle, passing it to each other, then kissing with our wine-wet lips, laughing, joking, like two irresponsible children.

I shall never forget those hours with Julian; those first all-important hours of love admitted and expressed between us. In a way, we remained apart—in another we were welded spiritually into one and I could not believe—(whatever else I had forgotten)—that there had ever been another love in my life.

12

THE picnic was over. Julian and I sat smoking, our arms about each other, leaning against the tree. He told me a lot more about the island.

"I want to take you to Valldemosa some time," he said. "George Sand lived there with Chopin one hundred and twenty years ago. Poor dear Chopin, sick and nervous, composing his glorious Nocturnes and Preludes whilst that strange tempestuous woman ran his life and watched him slowly die."

I shivered.

"I don't want to go there. I don't want to see Valldemosa or have anything to do with unhappy love, or death."

Julian turned to me and murmured in my ear.

"If I began to die as I composed my opera, would you stay with me and watch over me and still love me?"

"Yes, I would," I said fervently—and was astonished and intoxicated by my own emotions.

He looked deeply into my eyes.

"You have the most beautiful expression on your face when you look at me like this—and the most wonderful smile, I believe everything you say," he whispered. But almost immediately he got up, brushing the crumbs and dry leaves from his jeans.

"Come, Rune," he whispered hoarsely and held out his hand. "I must take you back."

At once my spirits fell.

"Why—?"

Into his eyes there crept a mixture of tenderness and regret.

"Because we've both been deceiving ourselves into thinking we can be lovers," was his sombre reply, "and we can't."

I felt crushed—as though a terrible calamity had suddenly overtaken me. There was no more sunshine. The glory of loving and living was about to fade beyond my reach.

"You promised to look after me—" I cried out in terror but again he interrupted me:

"Rune, so I will. I will always be your friend but we must be sensible. I can't—I mustn't make love to you. You are what you are. I am what I am. It's unthinkable that we should forget that and lose our heads—ever again."

"Just because I'm my uncle's heiress and you are poor and struggling to earn your living?"

He turned his face from me.

"If you like."

"That's old stuff—out-of-date—the poor man refusing to marry the wealthy girl. Don't be ridiculous!" I exploded on a note of frustration, my anger mixed up with my fear of losing what had suddenly become the most precious thing in the world to me—Julian's love.

He pulled the familiar little bag of tobacco from his pocket and began to roll a cigarette. He hunched his shoulders. That was another gesture I was beginning to recognise—that hunch of mingled weariness and exasperation.

With bitterness I spoke again:

"I might have known. You were just carried away by the emotion of the moment. Okay—I'll gather my pride to-

gether and call it a day—I couldn't care less—suits me—and all that sort of thing."

That made him wince. I saw him frown. Then he said:

"I'll admit that I lost my head for a few minutes. You're too extraordinarily sweet, you know."

I hung my head dejectedly.

"Well, now, everything's fine—you're all sane and sensible and Mr. Marsh will return to his cottage and Miss le Motte to her castle. Satisfaction all round."

He took the cigarette from his mouth and scowled at me:

"Don't be sarcastic—it doesn't suit you."

"And it doesn't suit me to be kissed—then told that it was all because my boy-friend lost his head."

"Oh, God, don't be so maddening," he croaked the words. I could almost feel the fury he must experience because he couldn't actually *shout* the words. That, of course, broke down my defences. I ran to him and leaned my cheek against his shoulder.

"I love you," I said, "I know that I do."

He threw his cigarette down, ground it under his heel and put his arms around me.

"I love you too, you maddening, extraordinary girl."

"All right. If it's just my money you don't like the idea of, I'll give it up. I'll pack and leave the House of the Seventh Cross tomorrow."

"I believe that you would," he muttered. "You're so human and warm and generous, I believe you'd do just that!"

Happy again, I lifted my face and felt the sun warm upon it.

"Shall I, then?"

"Oh, darling," he brought his lips close to my ear, "Oh,

darling, don't tempt me. It's too soon. You're so young and so inexperienced and you don't even remember whether you have ever loved before. How can I take what you want to give? If we'd met in other circumstances I'd have asked you to marry me within forty-eight hours of our knowing each other."

Once more I was seized with a delirium of joy.

"How terrific! Ask me now."

His face creased into a smile but he shook his head and kissed my hands.

"I'll do nothing of the kind. I'm going to take you home. And you've got to think a lot more seriously before you say such things to me."

"I've no pride, have I?" I said gleefully.

"None at all. That's what makes you so frantically attractive. You're incapable of coquetry or pretence. You're all that I've ever wanted in a girl but I refuse to make love to you until you've had time to think everything well over. You don't even know the actual terms of your uncle's Will. And I don't know whether my opera will be rejected or accepted. It's only half finished, anyhow. Our present position is impossible. Besides, I've got this atrocious disability. I refuse to become any girl's *whispering* husband . . ." he ended with the croak that should have been a laugh.

"Oh, Julian!" I bit my lip and struggled against my tears, but he would not change his mind and in the end he convinced me that we were both crazy and that whatever happened in the future it was out of the question that I should rush madly out of my uncle's house at this stage of affairs. I felt miserable and deflated but unfortunately I had to agree with Julian. I tried to smile.

"Heavens! I do seem to have gone all blah, don't I? See

what an effect you've had on me—or is it sunstroke? Take me home, Julian. You're quite right. And I'm sorry I've been so idiotic."

"For God's sake, don't start apologising," he said. "It's been the most wonderful thing in the world. I'll never forget today as long as I live. All I want for you is to be happy, Rune. Let's just go on being friends for the moment."

"I agree."

As we drove down the steep winding road that led back to the coast I felt indescribably unhappy, but I reproached myself.

This is what comes from losing your self-control. You've behaved disgracefully. Pull yourself together, my girl.

So my golden day ended. I sat in silence as Julian drove me back to the Calvario. And, of course, I began to wonder now whether I'd shown my feelings far too plainly and shocked Julian. I felt ghastly. But as we drove up to the gates of the Seventh Cross he dispelled *that* bogy. He said:

"I want you to know that nothing more wonderful has happened to me in my whole life, Rune. For the first time since my accident you've made me feel a man again—a human being, instead of an impoverished wreck. I love you and I shall always be on call when you want me. Okay?"

"Okay," I echoed the word but felt my lips trembling.

"I'll come up in the morning for an hour or two at the piano," he said on a more casual note. "All my thanks for letting me drive your car."

"And thank you for being such a good chauffeur," I said lightly, but felt the words were hopelessly inadequate.

I walked into the house. Renata met me in the hall. She gave me a sour look.

"I saw the senorita returning. Shall I ask Miguel to put away her car?"

"Do," I said, and added acidly, "I'm sure you were watching for me."

Her thin lips tightened.

"There has been a telephone call from Barcelona. The senor is returning on the evening 'plane."

"I thought he was staying away the night."

"He is anxious about you and wishes to come home sooner, senorita."

Then I turned on her with that hot temper that was, I realised, all part and parcel of my present tensed-up condition.

"I presume that you told him I'd gone out for a drive with Mr. Marsh and put ideas in his head. You're always watching and spying. I don't like it and I won't have it—do you hear?"

Renata went livid. She looked as though she was going to have a fit. But she was more controlled than I. She bowed almost in half and said in a cringing tone:

"No, no, just I am anxious—like the senor—for the senorita's well-being."

"Oh, leave me alone! Mind your own business and allow me to mind mine!" I cried and ran up the staircase into my bedroom.

My heart was hammering. I didn't know whether I wanted to laugh or cry. I only knew that down there in that little cottage through the trees the man I loved was returning to his solitary frugal life, and that it was all wrong that he should be there, or that I should be here, and equally wrong that I should be so rich and he so poor; and that whether we loved each other or not there was this barrier between us.

All kinds of wild thoughts came into my mind. I must find out more about myself and my past. I must, or the blankness would separate me from Julian. I must put a speedy end to my present existence in this house with Mark Jervis and that dreadful housekeeper; and all the secrecy surrounding them. I must be *free*, for at the moment I was a prisoner of my own terrible loss of memory and almost completely in the hands of these people whom I hated, and who were trying to direct my life.

Mark would be back tonight. This time I wouldn't let him get away with all the mystery. I would insist on seeing my Uncle's Will, then make my own decisions and plans for the future. Thank God for Julian. He had made me feel I was no longer alone. That thought was the saving grace. Julian had promised to be there when I needed him, and I might, I knew, need him very greatly. As a friend. (And as a lover, but that must wait!) He was right—love was something that could come like a streak of lightning but pass as suddenly. This love must never be allowed to die—this mutual passionate love we had discovered up there on the mountainside.

I went into my bathroom, stripped and stood under the cold shower. I felt as though I was burning from head to foot. When I had changed into a fresh dress and brushed my hair I looked at my still-burning face in the mirror. I whispered:

"Julian loves you. He has said so. He has kissed those lips, those eyelids, that throat, those breasts. You belong to him now, whatever happens."

Suddenly I felt the need for action. I would go mad if I had nothing to do but wander round this great gloomy, beautiful house until Mark returned.

I decided to contact my father's solicitor in Paris. I had their number. It was in my bag; on the original letter giving me instructions as to how to reach the House of the Seventh Cross. I must make contact with *someone* who had known me well in Paris. Something might be said that would strike a note—penetrate the darkness.

I shut myself in Mark's study and put the call through to Paris.

Half an hour later I was speaking to M. Reboule who appeared to be the senior partner of the Paris solicitor. He began by speaking in French and when I said I couldn't speak French, he continued in excellent English but seemed astonished once he heard my name.

"Rune le Motte," he exclaimed. "*You say you are Rune?* But Rune speaks perfect French—like a Parisian—what has happened?"

My knees began to tremble. I felt a little sick as I always did when I was searching back through the mists in my mind. It seemed that the firm of *Henri Reboule* had not been informed of my accident. When I told M. Reboule about it he said he was astonished and alarmed. (He sounded an extremely nice man.)

"*Ma chère petite*—this is terrible. You are suffering from amnesia, you say? *Mon Dieu!* But *why* you cannot speak in French—I do not understand. It should come as easily to you as English."

"There's a lot I don't understand," I said.

"Naturally. It is all part of your present trouble. But your voice—even that has changed. It has gone down an octave—" he tried to laugh this off lightly but what he said was sufficient to increase my nervous trembling. I had to grip the telephone with both hands.

"M. Reboule—I don't believe I *am* Rune le Motte. I have never believed it."

"Oh, come—that is carrying things too far, my child. You're there in your uncle's house, are you not? You were taken from the wrecked car with your luggage—your papers of identification?"

"Yes, yes."

"Then there can be no mistake."

"There was another girl with me."

"Another girl? Who?"

I passed my tongue over my lips. They seemed suddenly dry.

"A girl named Rosamund Lowe—Rose, she called herself. She was a tourist and I was supposed to have picked her up just outside Palma. She was shaken but she wasn't hurt at all."

"Where is this girl now?"

"She left Majorca a few days after the accident, apparently, and now nobody knows anything about her or even her address."

"That is a pity. It would have been helpful to you, perhaps, to be able to talk to her."

"M. Reboule," I said urgently, "It can't be a question of mistaken identity—of this girl and myself having changed places, or anything—?"

He interrupted with a laugh.

"That is a little too far fetched, *ma pauvre enfant*. You've been reading thrillers, eh?"

"No," I muttered, "I haven't been reading any thrillers. I only wondered."

"We must try to trace this girl," said M. Reboule, and I felt that he was humouring me rather than being impressed

by what he called my far-fetched idea. "It could be done, I'm sure, through the Passport Office. Would you like me to try and find this Miss Lowe for you?"

"Yes," I said breathlessly. "Yes, I would."

"I have an English friend in London—an *avocat*. I shall get in touch with him at once."

"Thank you, M. Reboule."

"But I hold out little hope even if she is traced that she will support your fantastic idea."

I felt suddenly deflated.

"Yes, it is fantastic, of course. Yet I don't *feel* that I am Rune. I've never felt it. And as far as my memory goes, I could as easily be Rosamund Lowe. Rose . . . Rose . . . oh, M. Reboule, that name fascinates me, somehow."

As I put down the telephone I felt my heart fluttering nervously. An uneasy panic seemed to be spreading through my whole being.

Rose! *Rose!*

Somewhere at the back of my mind there seemed to be a build-up of knowledge about the girl I really was, yet did not know.

I was musical. Definitely musical. I had recognised so many of the things that Julian played or talked about.

Quite crazily I put another call through to M. Reboule. When it came through, he was kind and patient.

"You ask me if Rune le Motte was musical and went to many concerts or operas? Not that I can remember, *ma chère enfant*. Your dear Papa was certainly not interested in music. I knew him well. And when you were adolescent I seem to remember him telling me one day that you showed little interest in the arts. Most decidedly you could not play the piano. There was no piano in the le Motte apartment."

I felt sick. Disconnected from Paris again, I sat down and cupped my burning cheeks with both hands.

Why then could I play the piano? Why was I interested in art —all the arts?

I shut my eyes as though against the sight of the study where Uncle Paul used to work. I no longer wanted to know anything about *me*. Whatever I had been, I had died and been reborn and I was a different Rune from the Rune that my father's solicitor and old friend seemed to remember.

I stood up. I was panting and trembling. I cried aloud:

"Rose. *Rose!*"

Suddenly I was no longer in the House of the Seventh Cross. I was watching a game of tennis on a dull warm summer's day. It must be in England. It was a hard court and there were one or two glistening puddles around. It had been raining. But there were two girls and two men playing. One of the girls was fair and she looked like me. Her partner, wearing shorts and a white shirt, was good-looking—thin, dark, wiry. He called out:

"*Well played, Rosamund . . .*"

The fair girl laughed and called back:

"Well *left*, Peter. I thought you were going to take that ball. I had to run for it, didn't I?"

Rosamund and Peter? *I knew about Peter.* There had been a little more than friendship between Peter and Rose. He called her Rosamund. Rosamund was me—*was me.*

"Peter—" I called out that name wildly, and caught the faint odour of an anaesthetic. Of a voice—my own voice—laughing: "*You've just come from an operation. Oh, you doctors!*"

Dr. Peter Wright. That was his name.

Rosamund had been in his arms; kissed him. Rosamund had loved him.

Rosamund was the name of the other girl who had been in the car on the day of my accident.

Then I screamed:

"Julian!" And down I went on the study floor. Down again into the whirling fog of confusion and oblivion which they called 'total amnesia'.

When I woke up again I was back in that bed which I had begun to hate up in my big cool bedroom in the House of the Seventh Cross. It was dark except for a single lamp burning on the dressing-table.

Mark Jervis was sitting beside me.

13

I CAME to full consciousness rather slowly. I had forgotten about Rose and Peter and the tennis. I was all Rune le Motte again and Mark was being very pleasant to me, full of sympathy.

"I'm glad Renata told me to hurry home. Poor little Rune! She didn't think you looked well. I presume you had another of your blackouts."

"Yes," I said sullenly.

"Dr Fernandez has been to see you but didn't wake you up. He suggested that we let you sleep. He'll come and see you again tomorrow."

"I don't want to see him. I'm perfectly all right. It was just a bad turn."

"Well, if I were you I should stay 'put' and rest," said Mark, smiling in what was meant to be a benevolent way. But I thought, as I usually did, that he had a mean, mask-like face without warmth or real friendliness.

"What time is it?" I asked.

"About eight o'clock. I've ordered my own dinner for nine but did not anticipate that you would join me."

Now I remembered the call to Paris and a lot that had been said between M. Reboule and myself. I decided sullenly that I must be wary of Mark and not say too much. There were too many gaps in my memory, my consciousness, for me to be able to piece the jig-saw together correctly. Now that Mark had come back, I did however

remember all kinds of things that I had intended to question him about.

I sat up straight, pushing the hair back from my face. I didn't feel at all ill. I said so. I also told Mark that if he would kindly leave me alone, I would dress and join him for dinner. He humoured me by not arguing.

I bathed, got into my gold lamé suit, tied my hair back in a pony-tail and went downstairs. Mark was on the terrace drinking his aperitif. I refused the one he offered me but took a cigarette. He gave me a long look.

"I must say these turns of yours don't rob you of your beauty. You look most attractive."

I ignored the compliment and plunged straight into the fray.

"What right," I said, sitting down opposite to him, "has your cook-housekeeper to send for you just because I went out in my car with Julian Marsh? My blackout came later on. She didn't send for you because I wasn't well, but because of Julian."

Mark's cold grey eyes remained as expressionless as his smile.

"Oh, you musn't blame poor Renata for being so devoted. She loved your uncle and she thinks she should take care of you."

"Well, you can tell her to mind her own business—which is what I told her, myself."

Mark shrugged his shoulders and sipped his drink.

I went on:

"As for going out with Julian—I shall do so whenever I please. He drives my car very nicely and I had a most enjoyable run with him."

Now I saw a faint colour in Mark's sallow face.

"A pity. That friendship will do you no good—no good at all."

"Mark," I said, "we've had this out before. Let's agree to differ about Julian Marsh. There are other more important things we've got to decide."

Mark drawled:

"I couldn't agree more."

"You went to Barcelona to see Uncle Paul's solicitor. About the Will?"

"About the estate in general."

"Show me the Will," I said grimly.

Now I saw him move uneasily, and he frowned.

"Senor Iturrbo will be coming to see you soon. He will deal with the Will."

I felt a sudden surge of hatred of Mark coupled with complete distrust. Before I could control myself, I snapped:

"I wish to see that Will tonight."

"Senor Iturrbo has it—" began Mark. I cut him short.

"But you've got a copy. I know you have. It must be in Uncle Paul's safe. It's quite obvious you would keep a copy there and that you, as the confidential secretary, have already seen it."

When Mark began to deny this, I sprang up and attacked him furiously as though all the events of the past twenty-four hours—particularly those blinding, revealing hours with Julian—had given me all the courage I needed. It was one thing I didn't seem to lack, I thought wrily, whoever and whatever I was—I had some spirit and I certainly was not going to be lied to, or brow-beaten by Mark.

"I don't believe one word you say!" I exclaimed. "I think the whole atmosphere in this house is most peculiar, and the sooner I know the details of that Will the better. I refuse to

wait for Senor Iturrbo to come to Majorca. I know that you have a copy of the Will. If you won't give me the key to the safe I shall make it my business to send for someone to open the safe for me. As Rune le Motte, I am in charge of this house. I own everything in it and you will do what I say."

I calmed down after this outburst, feeling a little less brave as the seconds ticked by, but I was rewarded by seeing that I had dug behind Mark's frozen mask. The little dictator suddenly cracked and became quite human. I remembered that scene in the hall a few days ago when he had gone to pieces and Renata had told me that he had had a nervous breakdown; had begged me to deal gently with the senor.

I did not feel like dealing at all gently with Mr. Jervis.

He said, hoarsely:

"You seem to hate me. You say terrible things to me. Your uncle trusted me Why don't *you*?"

"Look, Mark, I've got a right to see the Will, and your continual efforts to fob me off are enough to make anyone suspicious."

"You're most unkind," he said, and for one horrifying moment I thought he was going to burst into tears.

"Mark," I said quietly, "there's no need for us to be unkind to each other. Just open that safe and show me a copy of the Will. I know there *is* one in there. Go on—admit it."

I could see him struggling with himself, his face changing from red to white, his lips twitching, then he gave a nervous laugh:

"Oh, very well, I do admit it. *And* that I've been trying not to give it to you. I've been marking time—because I did not think you were quite ready for the truth. I've kept hoping that if we got to know each other better you would

feel more inclined to accept and carry out your uncle's wishes."

I said with impatience:

"As usual, you speak in riddles, Mark. Whatever my uncle's wishes are, I've got to know about them some time. Show me the Will, Mark. *Now!*"

To my surprise Mark began to stutter and plead with me.

"Won't you wait? Please wait. Don't rush this—"

"I don't know what I'm rushing," I broke in, "I only know I want to see that Will."

An ugly light came into Mark's eyes, glittering behind the horn-rimmed glasses. He muttered:

"Julian Marsh has put you up to this."

"Don't be absurd. Nothing of the kind. He isn't concerned with my business affairs."

A few minutes more of hesitation, then Mark appeared to be beaten. He moved into the room and crossed to a small safe, knelt down and began to turn the dials. He certainly knew the combination. The heavy door swung open. He took out a large folded document tied with green tape. Watching him, I could see that he looked frantically nervous now, but I held out my hand relentlessly. Then as I began to open the first page he caught both my wrists and held them in a vice-like grip.

"Before you read it—I must tell you—this clause was nothing to do with me. I've only carried out your uncle's orders. I didn't make the Will —" he broke off stuttering.

"What *were* his orders?" I interrupted.

"I want you to hear from me personally about the one clause in the Will which will affect *us*—you and me—as a pair," he said almost despairingly.

Bewildered I stared at him.

"What are you talking about—*us*—as a pair?"

"There is one all-important condition, Rune. Your uncle was devoted to me. I did everything for him—I was like a son—"

I broke in:

"I know all this. Do for heaven's sake get on with it, Mark." And I tried to drag my wrists away from his, but he hung on as though to a life-line. He said:

"I, personally, receive only a small legacy and the cottage. You have the house and its treasures, but you will only inherit it all—and it means a vast fortune—*if you marry me.*"

It was out. I felt staggered. I sat quite still for a moment. I didn't even trouble to pull my hands away from Mark's. The Will lay where I had dropped it, like a white barrier between us, there on the desk. A paper barrier tied up with green tape. And I felt as though I had been plunged head-first into ice-cold water. I came up temporarily paralysed and spluttering. Then I said:

"You must be out of your mind—my uncle must have been out of his mind. I've never heard such a crazy thing."

"It isn't crazy. It's quite sensible and the natural result of his affection for me and his gratitude for my services. He did not know you but he wanted his niece to benefit and for us together to share his money and all the good things he left."

I passed the back of my hand across my lips. I had a feeling that Renata—who was about to serve the dinner—was hovering somewhere in the background, listening. I didn't particularly care. I was alive only to the incredible fact that my dead uncle had put this preposterous clause in his Will.

"My God—it's blackmail—I'm being blackmailed!" I cried. "How can I possibly marry a man who is an absolute

stranger to me—and whom I could never possibly care for?" I added brutally, "*I'm being blackmailed*!"

I kept repeating these words until suddenly they were like a tattoo, beating against my brain; and between Mark's face and mine there drifted another face. Rather like my own. A girl with cornflower-blue eyes, wearing a pale yellow linen suit. I was sitting beside her in a car; I don't know where. I only knew that she, too, beat a tattoo on the driving wheel with long tapering fingers and that she, too, kept repeating:

"*I'm being blackmailed.*"

Suddenly I stood up. It was as though a light pierced through the fog and reached my consciousness. The whirling clouds were blown away at last on the winds of truth. I knew the identity of the driver—the girl in the yellow suit, *and of the other girl* who sat beside her listening to her story. That other girl—the passenger—was Rosamund—*was me*! I was not Rune le Motte; I was Rosamund—called Rose.

Now I remembered Bristol—my secretarial job, with Mr. Wilkins, the solicitor. Rune le Motte had told me about the Will. She had told me about Mark and said that she didn't intend to be forced into this marriage with him.

I remembered listening to her at the time and thinking that her story was rather like a thriller. One by one the memories flickered on, like lights—growing ever brighter as they chased across my brain. Tiny lights breaking into brilliant life-sized facts.

I felt as though I had come out of a vacuum. At last I was a real concrete person, and although it was terribly confusing, I wasn't really afraid. I felt absolutely calm. There was to be no more fainting—no blackout for me this time. But

I couldn't speak, and after a moment I saw Mark Jervis's expression change from worry and self-pity to alarm.

"What is it?" he demanded. "You look very odd, Rune. Are you ill again?"

"No," I said slowly and distinctly, "I'm very well, much better in fact than I've been for a long time."

"Try and concentrate on the Will," he said, licking his lips. He released my hands because his own trembled. He lit a cigar and began to smoke it, and poured himself out another drink. I could see that he was in a far worse state of nerves than myself.

I sat there, thinking, *thinking*, gloriously conscious of my new mental freedom, and return to normality. I was unutterably relieved because I had nothing whatsoever to do with Paul le Motte, or his secretary, or his niece, or anything in the House of the Seventh Cross.

Rose! . . . my lips formed my own name soundlessly. *Easy now! Don't panic. Just go on remembering, and let Mark Jervis talk. Nothing he can say or do can hurt you now, or affect your life.*

A fantastic number of small memories jerked back into position in that network of the past.

The gold brooch—with the emerald flowers. The real Rune had been wearing that when I met her. Obviously she had kept it and left me the one with the sapphires here in her jewel-case.

My own little wrist-watch on the leather strap—my mother's birthday present to me—she must have taken that from my wrist and fastened it on her own in order to complete the metamorphosis.

Then there was that signet ring Mark wore. *That* had attracted my notice and worried me. Now I knew why. It

was the exact replica of the one Rune le Motte wore on her little finger. Her father's signet ring with the family crest.

Oh, where was she? Why had she done this thing?

Why, or how, this exchange of persons—of personalities—had ever come about, I certainly did not understand. But all the way along, *something* had told me that I was not the real Rune. But I'd got to find her, and quickly. *She* was responsible for this monstrous exchange—this planting of her name and her identity upon me. For some reason best known to herself *she* had decided to become Rosamund Lowe. If I tried hard I would doubtless remember a lot more. When I was quiet and alone, I would think it all out. Meanwhile there was this matter of the Will and the present tricky situation to deal with.

I said nothing, but heard what else Mark had to say. He was appealing to me to give the ridiculous marriage clause due thought and consideration. He realised, he said, that I mightn't care for him at the moment and that I must feel like turning the whole idea down out of hand. But that was why he had wanted me to wait before I read the Will. He had wanted me to get quite well, and settle down, and become so attached to him and to Pollensa that I wouldn't *want* to leave him.

He said mad things—such as that from the moment he had set eyes on me he had fallen in love, wanted to marry me, not because of the money but because he loved *me*.

I didn't believe one word. Dissecting the whole matter coldly, logically, I was positive that Mark wanted the money a lot more than Rune le Motte.

When I didn't answer, or give him one word of hope, he reverted to his rather malevolent, sinister self.

"If you insist on being too hasty and rushing back to

Paris, you'll lose not only a fortune but be unable to afford to keep up this house. In fact you'll lose everything. You'd do well to consider marrying me. Everything runs like clockwork here under my authority. Your uncle knew that. That's why he wanted us to marry. Rune—be sensible. Stay with me, for the rest of the year at least—give things a chance."

My teeming brain went on sorting itself out like a computer. Bit by bit the pieces of jig-saw were jogging into place, forming a pattern before my eyes. I began to understand. Old Paul le Motte had been a very sick man—sick in mind as well as in body—when he had been coerced into making that absurd Will (by Mark no doubt), backed by the Spanish lawyer, who *could* of course also be a crook. *And by Renata.*

A quick flick over the pages and I saw the signatures of the two who had witnessed the Will. One was Senor Iturrbo's daughter, Isabel Camponar. The other, Renata Bartolomé. A good pair—working hand in hand with Mark, I thought. But I was no ignorant little fool. My father, George Lowe, had been a lawyer. I had worked for a firm of solicitors, too. I'd typed hundreds of Wills and dealt with hundreds of legal fights over matters of inheritance. I knew just how easy it would be for a dishonest lawyer to work hand in hand with a dishonest client, and manoeuvre this sort of document that lay here on the table before me. Of course I didn't know the *facts* yet. It might be all above board. That, I had yet to discover; but there was one factor that could not be overlooked and which was in Mark's favour. If he had done any manoeuvring, why hadn't he persuaded the old man to leave him *everything* unconditionally? Or at the end, had Paul le Motte's wish to benefit his

own flesh and blood—his own brother's child—triumphed over his advisers?

I didn't know and I suddenly told myself with a crazy feeling of exultation that I didn't care, because I was *not* concerned. And the sooner I made this quite plain to Mark and proved my true identity, the better. The one thing that kept me silent for the moment was the knowledge that there were still so many little pieces missing from the final picture. The puzzle was not yet complete.

And there was Julian.

Mark was repeating:

"Give things a chance—*please*, Rune."

In ordinary circumstances I would have walked out of the house, straight down to Julian's cottage. I would have told him who I was and what I was, and that I remembered everything but the actual accident and its immediate aftermath. But one thing was painfully clear; the knowledge that if I let Mark know all that I now remembered (which would automatically put me out of the running as Uncle Paul's heiress), Julian would suffer. Mark would be furious and frustrated. He would at once turn Julian out of the cottage. *That* had been left to Mark. It was in the Will. And as Rosamund Lowe, I would have no right whatsoever to dictate to Mark—or demand that Julian Marsh should be allowed to come to the House of the Seventh Cross, and play that piano. He would never play it again. Probably he would never be able to finish his opera. It would be the end of his hopes—perhaps his life.

I loved Julian. I knew that I loved him. So for the moment I must not spill the whole story and create havoc for him. Whatever happened, I must first find out more about the real Rune le Motte. Behind Mark's back, I would

make my own enquiries, and one thing was certain—I would never sign any of the papers that Signor Iturrbo was bringing from Barcelona. I could not now commit myself.

My suspicions about Mark's integrity might be wrong. I couldn't be sure—but I didn't trust him. I would be playing a dangerous game, but play it I must—and alone. But at least I thought I had the intelligence, the vision, not to break the whole thing apart wildly and find myself—and Julian—the losers.

I felt almost light-headed—overcome by my sudden return to normality. I think I laughed a little wildly when at last I answered Mark's repeated appeals to me to give him a chance.

"All right," I said, "I'll stay here for the present. We'll see what happens."

I felt almost guilty when I saw the look of unholy joy that came into those disconcerting eyes of his. His colour was high.

"Oh, Rune!" he said, "thank you. I'm deeply grateful."

"I promise nothing," I said cautiously.

"But you don't want to throw away a fortune, do you?" he asked in a wheedling tone.

I could have laughed again and told him how little money counted with me. The luxury and splendour of this old Majorcan house had brought me no happiness. But down there in that humble cottage—and out there on the sunlit mountainside—with Julian it had been paradise.

I saw Renata hovering in the background. I called to her, rather maliciously.

"You needn't hide, Renata. I can see you. Why not serve the meal."

"*Si, senorita,*" she hissed the words.

"I hate that woman," I muttered.

Mark did not seem to care. His spirits had risen and I could see that he fancied he had half-won the battle already, He fussed around me, offered me iced drinks, cigarettes, asked me if I were too hot or too cold, or if I felt well enough to eat, and so on, until I snapped at him:

"For heaven's sake, don't carry on like this, Mark. I'm quite able to look after myself and I am completely well again. And if you want to know, I shan't have another blackout—ever!"

"Oh, but you might—" he began.

"I shall *not*," I interrupted.

He didn't understand and didn't worry. He tried to humour me.

"Oh, what a girl you are! I admire your spirit. I had no idea Uncle Paul's niece was going to turn out like you. You are a real character!"

I smiled to myself. Yes, I was just beginning to discover that I *had* character. I was not the type to be pushed around by any man—certainly not to be blackmailed! I was glad that I didn't belong to the le Motte family at all.

Suddenly—in a psychic flash—I saw coming into focus a little stone house in an old street near a beautiful bridge. Bristol—yes, it was in Bristol! It was my old home. My mother was there. She was then still alive. I remembered all kinds of little things about my childhood—my girlhood—and the sadness of losing her—then my struggle with life, alone.

I remembered Dr. Peter Wright and how much I thought I had loved him. But I hadn't. It had just been an adolescent's infatuation for the first really attractive man in her life. And

now there was Julian. There must always be Julian. I could never let him go.

I no longer felt even faintly interested in the Will but I had to read it. If I was going to be any use to Julian, I must act my part as Rune le Motte for a little longer.

All through dinner, Mark and I talked at cross-purposes. I could see that he was in a positive fever of desire to conciliate me, to win my approval of the monstrous scheme. I frustrated him every time he brought the subject up and finally, in exasperation, asked him why my uncle had ever tried to arrange a marriage between two people who were strangers, quite unlikely to fall in love with each other.

"But I did fall in love with you—at first sight," Mark assured me. I shivered. I found him repulsive. I felt sick at the mere thought of being *touched* by Mark Jervis. Cautious though I had to be, I could not restrain myself from mocking him.

"Don't you think the money is what really attracts you, Mark?"

"No!" he said violently. "Even if that was the first thought in my mind before you came here, it isn't any longer. I want to marry you whether I get the money or not."

"And where does the fortune go if we *don't* get married?" I asked sweetly.

Mark scowled.

"To charities—to the preservation of ancient Spanish arts, the great libraries in Madrid—in the Escorial, for instance—many big museums. Your uncle was so interested in these things. But it would be a crime to let his fortune be dissipated in Spain."

"Less of a crime than if two people just married in order

to get the money?" I asked, eyeing Mark through my lashes.

"With us it won't be like that—it will be because we love each other," said Mark.

Once more I shivered. I could hardly bear to hear the word *love* on this man's lips. My conviction strengthened that he and his friend, Senor Iturrbo, were crooks.

A beautiful moth, its wings iridescent in the light of the candles on the dinner table, suddenly flew into Mark's goblet, and fell into the wine. It struggled madly, helplessly. For an instant, with cold indifference, he watched its death throes. I jumped up.

"Pull it out—quick! It's too beautiful to die. Let it live!" I exclaimed.

He gave his icy smile, and pulled the fragile creature out by its wings, tearing them in the process.

I felt unreasonably furious with him.

"You cruel brute! Now it is finished. You had *better* kill it. Go on—kill it now—don't sit there watching it suffer!"

"How sensitive you are," he said and shrugged his shoulders as he destroyed the unhappy beautiful creature of the night.

I knew then that even if I had needed the le Motte fortune and there had been no Julian—I wouldn't have married Mark Jervis if he had been the last man alive.

I said nothing. I went on with the game I must play. After dinner—while I drank my coffee, I waded through the Will. There were a lot of bequests—he left a sum to his housekeeper, Renata—and a handsome legacy to Mark whom he described as "*my dear and faithful secretary*", along with Julian's cottage (Mark had been quite right in saying that the cottage was now his). The residue was for Rune on

condition she married Mark "*because*," the Will said, "*it is my wish that the bulk of my money and most of my possessions should pass into the hands of my brother's child, but it is also my considered opinion that Mark Jervis is well suited to help her direct and manage the estate and therefore, as her husband, will become joint legatee with her of both money and property.*"

When I had finished wading through the rest of the legal jargon, I raised my eyes to Mark and gave him what I'm sure was an enigmatic smile.

"You certainly gained Uncle Paul's fullest confidence."

"Yes, yes, I did," he said eagerly.

"A pity for you that Rune le Motte did not turn out to be a practical mercenary type who would fall in with the plan at once."

He looked anxious.

"But you are going to consider it, Rune? You promised—"

"Yes," I said, "the matter will be considered."

And in my own mind, I was thinking that there was a great deal for me to do during the next few days.

Already I had set the ball in motion for M. Reboule to try to trace Rosamund Lowe. If he succeeded it might well be that the real Rune le Motte would reappear on the scene. Then everything would fall into perspective. But I no longer had the slightest doubt that *I* was Rose Lowe, and that after the accident, the real Rune had changed places with me.

Why she had done such a mad, dangerous thing I couldn't be sure. But once that dinner with Mark ended and I went up to my own room, I thought it all over and the more I thought, the more I seemed to recall of my past.

I revived the memory of my arrival in Palma that fateful

day, and the still more fateful meeting with Rune le Motte. She had told me the whole story of her uncle's Will. It was she who had originally called it 'blackmail'. She had also told me that she was a hard, unaffectionate type who hated discipline and that she refused to be made to do anything she didn't want. She had no intention of marrying Mark Jervis. She wanted the money but refused to contemplate even the idea of such a marriage. She was in love with a boy she knew in Paris (his name flashed into my mind quite easily now, 'Nicki Mesurier'). He had gone to Nassau. Yes —that was it. I remembered. Rune had said she wanted to follow him. So, after the accident, the crazy, unscrupulous girl had planted her identity on me, either believing me to be dead or dying. As Rosamund Lowe *she* had gone to Nassau. That was it. If I wanted to trace her she would be there.

"I must ask Julian's advice," I thought.

But my heart sank almost at once because I remembered that I must not tell him the truth. I *must* play this farce out alone in order that he should finish composing his opera in peace.

14

When I woke the next morning I felt calm and strong, and curiously at peace with myself. It was a little frightening perhaps to be rocketed so swiftly from one personality to another, but I was much more at home with this other girl—this Rose, who had nothing whatsoever to do with Rune le Motte.

I decided to rush nothing. I was still rather afraid of Mark and his retinue.

I was polite but noncommittal when I saw him directly after breakfast.

It was the beginning of another hot, glorious day. Mark didn't look as though he had slept well. His eyes were sunken. I looked at him speculatively. I began to invent all kinds of things about him and his odd conduct. Maybe *he knew* that I wasn't the real Rune le Motte. Maybe not. Maybe he was heavily in debt and desperately needed far more than the old man had left him. So he was forced to try and link up with me. There were all kinds of 'maybes' but I let them ride for the moment. I thought it would be unwise of me to act too impulsively.

My one regret was that I dare not talk to Julian. It was of him I thought when I faced Mark again.

"I think," I said coolly, "that it would be quite a good idea for you to ring Senor Iturrbo and tell him I want to see him at once."

"About your marriage to me?" asked Mark, with an uneasy look.

I stepped on the terrace into a blaze of sunlight, putting on my sun-glasses. I looked down the Calvario.

"We're not going to discuss that for the moment, are we? We've agreed that I shall just stay here and see how things go."

"Oh, very well."

Then I saw Julian coming up the hill, wearing shorts and a checked shirt. He carried a portfolio of music under one arm. My heart leaped at the sight of the tall, lean figure and that impressive chestnut head.

"There's Julian coming up to play the piano," I said.

I saw Mark's nostrils quiver but he had command of himself and made no comment, except to say that he had received two invitations for us to dine with friends in the district—friends of my uncle—and that he hoped that I would allow him to accept them. One, he said, was a charming American woman who had a wonderful house on the other side of Pollensa. She and her husband had come from Malaya. They were delightful, interesting people and had built an astonishingly lovely house on the mountainside.

The other invitation came from a couple who used to live in Nairobi and were now on the Calvario. Their house was near us—higher up. The man was much travelled and very erudite. The wife was an attractive Viennese. My uncle had entertained them here in the past because he liked in particular to talk to the man about his various hobbies which included photography. He had taken some amazing photographs of animals whilst on safari during the old days in Kenya. Uncle Paul liked to see them. Mark babbled on about these friends but I was really not interested. I was

conscious only of the sound of the clanging gate and the sight of Julian coming up the steps to the front door. My heart seemed to tumble over and over.

I wondered what he would think if I told him that I knew now who I was. He had made it plain that he didn't want a rich girl in his life. That was wonderful. I could tell him one day about poor penniless Rosamund Lowe. But not one word now, not until that beloved opera was finished.

I could see Julian's eyes turning rather cynically in Mark's direction. He uttered a brief 'good morning' which Mark barely acknowledged. Then Julian bowed gracefully to me.

"*Buenos dias!* The senorita permits that I play her piano?" His whisper reached me. I don't know whether Mark caught it, but I smiled glowingly at Julian.

"With immense pleasure," I said somewhat theatrically.

Mark turned and walked into the house. I could see him trembling with anger. But laughter flowed in the glance between Julian and myself. I felt immense relief. He was obviously still my good friend even if he did not wish for the moment to be my lover. There was obviously no hostility, no embarrassment between us. That was as it should be.

I was even happier when Julian started to play the piano. His opera was developing. I thrilled at the sound of his latest addition to it—a wild, stirring song for the tenor. I didn't go into the salon to speak to him. I didn't think I could quite control myself, resist the impulse to pour out the whole exciting, crazy story of the identity I had regained.

I had work of my own to do.

Every morning, at this hour, Mark drove down to the market, to shop, like most of the residents on the Calvario. He generally took Renata in the car with him.

I had noted for some days now that the nice little daily maid, Anita, had been replaced by a dried-up old woman with a black bun and a face like a walnut, who squeaked in Spanish at me when we met. I didn't understand one word. It appeared to be one of Mark's quirks that he didn't wish anybody to come into the house who might talk to me; that was why he so detested Julian.

I waited until Mark and Renata had taken their basket and gone to the market. I think they were quarrelling. I heard their raised voices just before they went off and saw Renata positively fling her basket on to the back seat.

What was there between these two? The housekeeper must have some power over Mark otherwise she would not dare to be so bold. Well, all these mysteries were going to be solved very soon, I told myself. Rosamund Lowe was in a much stronger position than Rune le Motte.

I had made a plan of action and I carried it out. Once alone, I went straight to the telephone and put a call through to the firm of solicitors for whom I worked in Bristol. I didn't intend to speak to Mr. Wilkins. But anyhow it was his personal secretary who answered the 'phone. Winifred Nash was a nice woman and we had always been good friends. I was quite pleased to hear her voice.

When I said: "Hullo, is that you, Winifred?" there was a pause as though she was very startled. Then she exclaimed:

"Good heavens! Is that *you*, Rose?"

"Yes, it is."

"Where are you speaking from?"

"Majorca."

"Well, that's what the operator said, but I thought it couldn't be. You were in *Nassau*."

My pulses jerked uneasily.

"What makes you think that?"

"Mr. Wilkins had a letter from you—typed from an hotel—in Nassau. We were all staggered. You wrote that you'd had this chance to go there, and had taken it and were hoping we'd accept your notice and forgive you."

I gasped. I was on the point of denying the whole thing but kept my counsel. I was learning fast to do just that. Rune le Motte must have written that letter. As I had thought, she had followed her boy-friend to Nassau. And she had gone on *my* passport and to avoid questioning and awkwardness, she had thought it best to let my employers know that 'Miss Lowe' wasn't going back to them. The colossal nerve of it! Of course she knew, because I had told her that I worked for a firm of solicitors called Wilkins & Wilkins in Bristol, so it hadn't been hard for her to trace their address. But what I found so bewildering and incomprehensible was why she had done it. And she *must* have kept in touch with someone at the House of the Seventh Cross, and presumably that someone was Mark. *I was beginning to believe that Mark knew who I really was.* However, I thought it best for the moment to keep quiet. My conversation with dear old Winifred left no doubt about the fact that I was Rose. What I wanted now was the name of that hotel in Nassau. I had to have it. Rune le Motte would be there. I had to make her come back and establish my identity. I was building up a nice resentment against Miss le Motte. She had no right to do what she had done—involve me in such a way. Just supposing that I had never recovered from that awful concussion and amnesia? Supposing I had even gone so far as to marry the ghastly Mark, believing myself to be Rune. What did the real Rune hope to gain by it? Oh, there were all sorts of answers to that. She must have

been mad enough to think that she could buy my silence, and benefit from the money *through* me without being forced, herself, into the marriage. It all seemed very far-fetched but was a possibility. After what had happened, I thought grimly, *anything* was possible.

"Winifred," I said, "have you got a copy in your file of my letter to Mr. Wilkins from Nassau?"

"Why—yes, Rose—but—"

"Just turn it up, dear. I can't remember the name of the hotel and I want to write to them."

"But where are you now?"

"I told you—Majorca. I'll come and see you as soon as I get back to England and explain everything. Please trust me and say nothing to old Wilkie."

When Winifred started to complain about my memory—how *could* I forget the name of my own hotel, etc., etc.—I cut her short again. I was sure she was utterly bewildered by the whole thing but finally, respecting the price of a long-distance call—she looked up the letter and gave me the information I needed.

I rang off.

Now, I thought, the next thing is to find out from the exchange how long it would take to get a 'phone call through to the Green Palms Hotel in Nassau.

I had no conscience about using the telephone and booking that expensive call. Let the le Mottes pay for it! They had done me harm enough.

But the exchange told me the delay would be about four or five hours. Nassau was six hours behind Majorcan time. It would be four a.m. in the Bahamas, now. The only thing for me to do was to get away from this house while Mark was out and wait in a hotel for my call to come through.

I felt suddenly tremendously excited and strengthened by all the knowledge that was piling up in my consciousness.

While Mark and Renata were still down in the market place I sent for Miguel and ordered him to bring round my car. I could hear Julian playing—stopping—playing again. Hard at work. But for once I thought of myself. I ran into the salon and up to the piano.

"Julian," I said, "this is terribly important to me. Please drive me down to the Puerto. You can come back and work here later this evening—you have my full permission."

For a moment he looked at me blankly. He ran his long fingers through his mop of chestnut hair. Then as though I hadn't spoken, whispered:

"The love duet is perfect now, *perfect*. Listen, Rune."

I opened my mouth but shut it again. I had to curb my feelings. Besides, I loved him so much. I adored the way he just ignored my request and confided in me about his work. He was a true artist—lost in the composition of his *chef-d'oeuvre*.

I leaned on the piano and listened while he played the new duet. His eyes were half-shut. He kept tossing back his head. His lips moved. I thought:

He longs to sing. Poor Love! He longs to sing.

The music was moving, and to my mind strikingly beautiful, and dramatic. It would be superb, sung by soprano and tenor. But suddenly he crashed his fingers into a discord and the face he turned to me now was anguished:

"I want to sing it to you. But I can't. I can't. *Oh, Christ!* . . ."

I could see his whole body trembling. It was as I had guessed. That awful necessity to croak, to whisper, incapable of making the rich sound that had swept him toward

possible fame so short a time ago, sometimes overwhelmed him; destroyed his natural courage and optimism.

I forgot my regained memory. I walked behind him, put my hands on his shoulders, and leaned my cheek against his.

"Never mind—oh, Julian, my darling, never mind! I *know* what it will sound like, when sung. It will be glorious —fabulous. Oh, go on with it, Julian. Don't be discouraged, any more than Beethoven was when he went deaf and couldn't hear one note of the glorious Symphonies he gave the world."

I spoke with my heart but it seemed suddenly to amuse Julian. He shook with silent mirth, drew both my hands to his lips, kissed each palm and then looked up at me with the old mocking humour.

"You're wonderful! What a gorgeous tear-jerking speech! Me and Beethoven! *Fidelio* or my little masterpiece. Oh, God, you're wonderful, Rune! And you're so right. If Ludwig von Beethoven did not give up because of his deafness why should I because I can't sing any more? I'm not writing the bloody opera for myself anyhow. Why the hell am I so full of self-pity?"

Oh, how I loved him then. I loved him even when he swore; he could use all the 'hells' and 'bloodys' he wanted to, I thought, if it made him feel better. Once again I became the girl of yesterday without pride or timidity (although I had pride of another kind and passion, too). I sat down beside him on the piano-stool. I threw myself into his arms and lifted my lips for his kisses. Now there was no restraint in Julian either. He kissed me with a breathless passion that went to my head like wine. It was as though he was as hungry for love—our love—as I was. It was all glorious and natural. And, as we had done up in the mountains

yesterday, we laughed and teased each other between our long, devouring kisses.

He ran his fingers through my hair, tossing away the Alice band, drawing the long fair strands across his lips—coming back to my mouth.

"Mad, lovely girl. You're off your head."

"Mad, crazy, Beethoven the Second—you're off yours."

"You're musically, technically, hopelessly inaccurate. I'm no Beethoven."

"You're *my* Beethoven."

His lips burned against my eyelids, shutting away the laughter that I know he could read in them.

"Idiot girl—I'm not even a Puccini. Or did you think just now that my duet was better than anything in *Tosca* or *Butterfly* or *Bohème*?"

I covered his warm brown cheek with kisses.

"Better than all of them. Oh, Julian, finish your opera soon. You're going to be so famous."

"And *in*famous. I have absolutely no right to make love to you like this."

I lay in his arms, exhausted by emotion, hot, breathless, blissfully happy.

"*I'm* making love to *you*. We're quits."

He whispered:

"You're the most adorable girl in the world. If you were anybody but Paul le Motte's heiress—"

I nearly, very nearly, said:

"Well, I'm not. I'm *not*. Let me tell you who I am—"

But I stopped myself just in time. Because of his music, and this piano, and that cottage. I put a finger against his lips and questioned him, with apparent innocence.

"Well—what *would* you do if I was just a poor, poor girl

—never likely to inherit a fortune, let alone win a Football Pool?"

"I won't tell you."

"Oh, please," I begged.

"Very well. I'd drag you this very moment down to my cottage and behave like a peasant and I—"

He broke off, pushed me away from him and stood up.

"Go and do your hair and wash your face," he whispered hoarsely. "I've covered it with lipstick, you detestable, lovely creature and you've ruined the spell for me. I can't work any more."

I giggled, twisting my hair round my fingers.

"Oh, tell me what a peasant would do?"

"Rune, will you behave yourself?"

No—not Rune, but Rose, I thought. *It's Rose—the real one whom he will love some day—like a peasant!*

My cheeks burned from his kisses. I leaned one against his smooth brown face. I murmured:

"And peasants make wonderful lovers, don't they?"

"Go away!" whispered Julian, scowling at me. He crashed his hands down on the piano and began to play with exaggerated drama the splendid opening bars of the Fifth Symphony.

I put the band back on my tumbled hair.

"Julian," I said breathlessly, "stop playing. You've got to drive me down to the Puerto now—this instant."

This time he took in what I said. He stared at me.

"What—in the middle of my work?"

"I know it's selfish but I've *got* to go now. I want to get away before Mark comes back so that I don't have to face a scene."

Julian shut the lid of the piano—apparently resigned to

the interruption—extraordinarily good-tempered about it.

He stood up, hands in the pockets of his jeans and stared down at me.

"What goes on?"

I was bursting to tell him but decided on a half-truth.

"I've remembered a certain name—I've got to phone this person—I used to know her in the past. It means a lot to me. It'll take about five hours to get through, as she is in the Bahamas. Yes—isn't it frightful! All that way. I can't speak here, in this house with Mark and that ghastly Renata listening. I don't want Mark to know about it."

"You sound very mysterious—" began Julian.

"Don't try and understand," I broke in pleadingly, "just trust me—help me, Julian."

When he seemed to hesitate I clutched at both his arms.

"Please, *please* drive me down to the Puerto and don't ask me any questions. But I may have something marvellous to tell you later on."

He grimaced and pulled on one ear.

"All very strange," he whispered, "but you seem so bent on it—I'll take you. You've done a lot for me. I must do something for you."

"Thank you," I said humbly.

I was mad with impatience to get out of the house. I must speak to that girl in Nassau. I must confirm what I practically knew now to be the truth.

We actually passed Mark coming up the hill as we drove down. As we rounded one of the sharp hair-pin bends, I saw the bonnet of Mark's car flashing in the sunlight as he drew near to us.

"Don't stop—drive on—pass him!" I cried, drawing a little closer to Julian.

"Suits me," he muttered.

The two cars seemed almost to graze each other but of course they didn't. Mark pulled up, leaned out of the open window, glared, and shouted:

"Where the devil are you going?"

"For a nice drive!" I shouted back and giggled as Julian touched the accelerator with the tip of his toe and we continued downhill at a somewhat perilous speed. Down, down and around the hair-pin bends until we were lost in the hot dim streets of Pollensa. We came out on to the main road where we really put on the speed. I glanced at Julian. He grinned back at me, shaking his head in silent disapproval, but the grin remained.

It was quite impossible for Mark to turn on that steep hill and follow us. He had to drive on up to the Seventh Cross but I realised he might come back. He'd search the Puerto and if we stayed and parked the car outside one of the hotels, he'd see us for a certainty.

"Don't let's go to the Puerto," I said, "Mark might follow. Let's go further away. Let's stay out all day again. I've got some cash. Don't argue about who pays for lunch. This means life or death to me. Let's go on—*please*, Julian—anywhere you can think of where I can put in a long-distance call in peace."

Julian pulled up the car and began to roll himself a cigarette.

"I don't quite know why this should mean 'life or death'. Women do exaggerate. However—it's your business, not mine. As for me, cruising around Pollensa as your chauffeur—it's hardly in my line. You've thoroughly upset the even tenor of my existence. Do you realise that until you arrived I used to live like a hermit? I only saw the odd friend, and that very rarely."

"You can't live that way any more. You've got to consider me," I said brazenly.

"You're quite a girl," Julian said, shook his head and gave that low almost soundless chuckle. But at least I could see that he was amused. I couldn't bear him to be cross. Suddenly he bent his head and kissed me on the lips.

"I'm rapidly becoming about as crazy as you are. I love you, you mad creature."

"I love *you*!" I said and felt weak with delight, "but for heaven's sake do let's move on before Mark follows us. Where can we go?"

He thought a moment.

"The only real friend I've made in this district is a sculptor and a very fine one, too. As a matter of fact there's hardly a house in Pollensa that hasn't got one of his works of art in it. His designs are unique. He and his wife and child live in the hills not far from here. If I take you there, I know you'd be welcome. They'll allow you to use their 'phone. You can pay for your call but it won't matter how long you stay there—they're very friendly."

"It's very private—" I began anxiously.

"You'll be all right," Julian interrupted. "They won't be interested. They'll enjoy meeting you, the famous Miss le Motte, and no doubt congratulate you on dragging me out of my tomb. Nobody else has been able to."

"Good," I said, and put my lips against his hard smooth palm.

I felt immensely close to Julian. The stranger had indeed become so close that I couldn't even imagine a moment when I would no longer see him—be near him. It had all happened so fantastically quickly, this blinding, incomprehensible love—it seemed unrealistic, yet it was true. I loved

Julian and I think he was beginning to love me in the same way. We had been flung together by a fate both kind and unkind. But what had happened was inevitable—the future held limitless possibilities and made me think of those marvellous words spoken by Shakespeare's Hamlet:

I eat the air, promise crammed . . .

Later today, I told myself, things might fall more into perspective. I would have found out from 'the other girl' what I so desperately wanted to know. Then perhaps I could believe that once that opera was finished, Julian and I would never need to leave each other again.

15

THE personal call to Miss Rosamund Lowe, Green Palms Hotel, Nassau, came through at half past four that afternoon. Six hours after Julian and I had left the House of the Seventh Cross. Mark had not the slightest idea where we were and if he went in search, he did not find us. Julian's friends, the sculptor and his wife, left us alone in their charming little house. They had planned to spend the day on the beach over at Formentor, anyhow, they told us. They were a friendly, easy-going couple and as Julian had predicted, asked no questions but seemed delighted to see Julian with a girl-friend. They had heard of my arrival in Pollensa. Of *course*, who hadn't, they laughed. We could stay as long as we wanted and have our lunch there. We would find pâté, bread and cheese in the kitchen, and there was a bottle of white wine on the ice.

So once more, on a dazzlingly sun-baked day on the enchanted island, Julian and I lunched together. First I booked my call, then we sat talking the hours away. Both appeared to be enchanted with each other's company.

It was lucky that Julian was not inquisitive. He was so obsessed with his work he talked of little else. I offered to help with the libretto, and I dashed off a few lines then and there. I was deliriously happy when Julian told me he would use them. It seemed to delight him that I wanted to fling myself heart and soul into his cherished work, and share his mood.

We dared not go for a walk, in case my call came through earlier than expected. We sat out on the piazza under green vines. It was cool there. We enjoyed a home-made pâté with fresh crusty bread, fruit, and newly-picked almonds. Then I made coffee and we drank that with our wine, and smoked together. I began to feel that I was beginning to know Julian really well. (Better than he knew me!) I hated deceiving him. I felt especially guilty when he kept calling me *Rune*—that name which I knew now was not mine. But I accepted it in silence.

The most difficult moment came when he drew me into his arms, smoothed the hair back from my face and said:

"You're very beautiful and very kind to a wreck like myself but I don't feel I have any right to let this sort of association continue. You know why."

I didn't know how to restrain myself from telling him I was as impoverished as he was, but still maintained my silence. I must keep control over Mark and that cottage—anything rather than Julian should suffer. Already, perhaps, because he felt that his destiny lay in my hands just now, he looked better—happier. I wanted to keep him that way.

I contented myself with putting a hand over his lips and telling him that I refused to listen to any more protests from him.

"You aren't a wreck, and we've found a lot of happiness. Let's keep it. We obviously like being together, and we have a lot in common. Let's leave it like that. Oh, Julian—don't look further than tomorrow—and tomorrow—and tomorrow!" I finished breathlessly and hugged him.

The telephone bell shrilled out. With a fast-beating heart I left Julian, ran into the house and shut the door.

The line to Nassau was not very good. Sounds came in loops and waves at first but the voice of the girl at the other end soon seemed clear enough. I think she could hear me, too. We didn't have to repeat much. I can't say I recognised her voice at all but as soon as she acknowledged that she was Rosamund Lowe, I plunged straight into action.

"No, you're not—you're Rune le Motte," I said. "*I'm* Rosamund Lowe!"

Silence. I think that first shot must have knocked her flat. Then she stammered:

"What *do* you mean? Who are you? What is all this about?"

"The game's over, Rune," I said. "I'm Rose Lowe. My memory has come back. I'm sorry, but you've got to face up to it. All these weeks I've been walking in your shoes and they're beginning to pinch. They don't suit me. But now I know who I really am and you've got to switch back to *yourself*. I want my passport back. You can have yours—*and* all that goes with it."

Another pause. Then the girl at the other end of the wires gave a hard little laugh.

"Well, well, I could crack down the receiver and pretend I don't understand but I don't suppose it's much use me going on with this farce. So you've recovered your memory, and they let you out, did they? I'm surprised in one way, though not in another. It was a fifty-fifty chance that you'd snap out of that fog some time."

"You've played a pretty rotten game," I said indignantly, "planting your identity on me like that—involving me after the accident. And what for? It was criminal, really."

"Oh, come off it," said Rune le Motte, "don't let's talk in that spirit. What harm has the switch done you, anyhow,

honey? You've had your holiday in Majorca at my expense. Haven't you enjoyed it?"

I felt utterly astounded. Rune le Motte was not mad, only utterly unscrupulous. Of course there *were* people in the world like that, I thought. Adventurers, schemers, people with neither honour nor integrity. They were not always fictitious characters. They existed and Rune was one of them.

"When did your memory come back?" came Rune's next question.

"Yesterday, I suppose. It's been coming back in snatches for some time."

"A pity. Things were working out quite nicely as they were."

"Why did you do this thing?"

"It's far too complicated to explain on a long-distance telephone call," Rune le Motte answered. "And, if you want to know, I've only just woken up! I was at quite a party till the early hours. It's only just ten a.m. here, you know."

Yes, I knew the difference in time but I couldn't be sorry I'd woken the wretched girl up. I felt frightfully angry with her—yet there was a hint of truth in her outrageous observation that the switch hadn't done me any harm. True, I had had my Majorcan holiday at her expense. *And* there was a lot more she didn't know, I thought. I really owed it to her that I had met Julian. The thing might be mad and bad—and of course it *was*, especially as all that money was involved. Besides it couldn't be right for anybody to take on the identity of another person. It must, inevitably, lead to disaster. (But oh, thank God I had met Julian!).

I said:

"Look here, Rune—you don't seem to realise how complicated it's all become. Perhaps you've forgotten the terms of the Will. Did you really expect me to marry Mark Jervis?"

"I hoped you would."

Her audacity made me gasp.

"Hadn't you better explain a bit more fully?" I said. "I'm still in a fog. *Why* did you change places with me? Does Mark Jervis know? Or does he *really* believe that I am *you*?"

"It's impossible to tell you everything now," she said and repeated the words, adding: "I'm coming back to Europe soon. As a matter of fact, I might have turned up in Majorca this week if you hadn't contacted me. Nicki and I have fallen out. You remember my boy-friend, Nicki Mesurier who came out here—whom I joined. Well, it all went badly with us. Now I need money. I'm very much in debt."

"That hardly concerns me—" I began.

She broke in:

"Oh, well, I suppose it's only to be expected that you should be angry with me."

"Angry!" I repeated the word, shouting it down the telephone. "That's putting it mildly. You've done the most monstrous thing taking advantage of someone who's lost her memory. My accident was all your fault, too. You might remember it was *you* who crashed that car."

"Dear me, you *are* being tough!" drawled Rune, "Don't waste your money bawling me out. A slanging match will cost you about three dollars a minute. I repeat—I'm coming over to Europe. I'll drop in at Pollensa. Then we'll settle the whole affair."

"When?" I demanded.

"Well, you'll have to be patient and wait. I've got certain commitments here. If you want to know, I'm involved with

an American whom I might eventually marry. Now look here—" Rune went on in a wheedling voice, "Be a sport and give me a few months more."

"Why should I—?" I began.

She broke in:

"Do stop being so pugnacious. What difference will it make to you whether you carry on with the game for a few more weeks or months? I need time. I don't particularly want to marry Mark Jervis any more than you do. It's the money I want. And it's the need for it that made me act the way I did."

I was speechless. I thought Rune le Motte must, truly, be a little off her head—or was she just one of those coldly mercenary types who didn't care a fig for anybody else's feelings? If it hadn't been for Julian, I would have told Rune that I wasn't prepared to give her another day's grace, and that I'd put the whole affair in the hands of my lawyers.

I was sick of being Miss le Motte. I wanted passionately to become myself again and be able to live in the clear. But there was still Julian. It might suit me to give the wretched Rune more time—and to keep Julian in happy ignorance of the truth.

I said:

"Hello, Rune—are you still there?"

"Yes."

"What difference would it make if you did tell your American who you are? Why go on letting him believe you are Rosamund Lowe? What *is* all the mystery?"

"I keep telling you, I can't go into full explanations on a Transatlantic call. I'll tell you everything one day. But whether you approve or not, I won't allow you or anybody else to come between me and a possible fortune out here.

And it'll be a fortune without strings this time. Marriage in America isn't like marriage in Spain where divorce and alimony are almost impossible to get. That's why I left *you* to deal with Mark. Having to stay in Pollensa with him wouldn't have been worth ten pesetas to me."

With that I had to agree, but I said nothing.

"And," Rune continued, "if I don't pull off this American affair I may have to get myself to Pollensa and handle Mark. He and I are quite good friends at the moment."

"So," I exclaimed breathlessly, "you *are* in league with him. The whole thing's a put-up job between you two."

"You might call it that."

"How *could* you!" I exclaimed. "You must be really wicked."

"Are you going to give me the time I need?" Rune asked, ignoring my outburst.

I climbed down.

"Okay," I said rather sullenly. But I didn't like it. It was only the thought of that marvellous, injured man outside there on the terrace that made me utter the affirmative.

"Well—thanks a lot! Keep up the good work and enjoy yourself," said the incredible Rune. "I'll send you a cable when I intend to fly to Majorca. It'll probably be on my honeymoon," she added, laughing. "You can carry on till then, can't you?"

"I suppose so," I answered unwillingly, and began to wonder whether I was not doing something very wrong by agreeing to the continued deception. Up till now I had acted as Rune in good faith. But every word I spoke in future—everything that I did—would be a living lie.

"Rune," I said, "don't ring off for a second. Listen—there's something I want to tell you. You *will* come and

adjust the whole thing here in Pollensa soon, won't you? You've *got* to release me. If you don't I have heaps of witnesses now—people who have known me all my life who can prove my identity. I shan't hesitate to make a law-suit of it and it will ruin you *and* Mark Jervis."

"Okay, okay," said Rune's voice, and she spoke as resentfully as though she were innocent, undeserving of my threats. "I don't want trouble. Actually I'm as fed up with the situation as you are. And I much prefer the name Rune to Rose, anyhow. So long!"

After this deliberate insolence she rang off, laughing. I put down the receiver. I couldn't cope with such a girl. My face felt hot. My forehead was wet with perspiration that trickled down my nose. My heart was galloping. The whole thing seemed horrid and very disturbing to my peace of mind. I waited for a minute or two before joining Julian. I had asked the operator to tell me the cost of the call. When I knew, it made me blink. It was a lot of money. But of course I would see that these nice people got paid. I would make Mark finance me. I felt sure I could get anything out of him if I treated him gently. But my heart sank at the thought.

I found Julian examining the English rose-bushes in the garden. He turned and said something to me but I didn't hear it. Usually by straining my ears, and doing a little lip-reading I managed to understand everything he said. I hated asking him to repeat anything. I knew it gave him an inferiority complex. I made a guess at it.

"Yes, aren't those roses splendid, despite the heat!"

I was close enough to him now to hear his next whisper:

"A gardener has to work hard out here. It's a constant battle against drought and the creepy-crawlies."

I nodded and stood staring at him rather blankly. I felt tense and nervous. That conversation with the real Rune had established yet another definite link between myself and the past.

"You've had the heck of a telephone call," Julian remarked with a crooked smile. "A boy-friend, I presume."

I cleared my mind of misery, doubt and apprehension. I flung my arms around his neck and drew his face down to mine.

"Then you presume wrong. *You* are my only boy-friend!"

He kissed me with passion and purpose but drew away—the old bitter look drifting back in his handsome eyes.

"I'm not, you know. I can't be any girl's boy-friend, especially not Rune le Motte's."

"Oh, shut up, *shut up*!" I said, and to my own horror burst into tears. I was so wrought up after that conversation with Rune.

Julian looked startled. He took me in his arms and comforted me.

"All right, all right, silly one," he whispered.

"It's not all right," I wept, holding on to him convulsively, "you don't understand. One day you will. But now, oh, *please*, if you care a damn for me, stop talking about who and what I am, and what *you* are, and making things so awkward. Let's just be together when we can, and love each other while we can!"

"You tempt me," he said with his soundless chuckle and picked up a handful of my hair and ran it across his lips. He seemed to like to do that. But he made no further protest, so we sat a while in the shade of the vines and shared a glass of iced wine, and smoked, and talked about Julian's work.

"Julian," I said in a small voice, "try and tell me how long you'll take to finish your opera."

"Lord knows—" he began, but I interrupted.

"Try and tell me, please, approximately. I want to know."

He frowned and answered with some impatience.

"How can one tell? You know enough about music to realise that one can't work to order at that sort of thing. I try to do a little every day. I hope it won't be much longer. Now that you've come, and I've got the piano, it all helps."

"*I* help, don't I?" I begged with a lump in my throat.

"Silly little thing—you know you do."

His eyes were tender, without bitterness again and I was comforted. But I couldn't pin him down to even a possible date for completion of his *magnum opus*.

I sat holding on to his hands rather dejectedly, wondering how long I could hold out against the march of time—make sure that the opera was completed and Julian safe before Rune turned up in Majorca. I could only be thankful that I had given way to the impulse to ring her today. She had meant to turn up unexpectedly. And if she had done so without warning me, it might have had a disastrous effect.

As we drove back to the Calvario, I found myself growing more and more unhappy. I was on the edge of a volcano that might erupt at any moment. How could I deal with Mark? And *what* in heaven's name had he and the wicked Rune cooked up between them after my accident? Had they intended to keep me in the House of the Seventh Cross against my will? Had they presupposed that I would be too mentally confused to go away or, in time, refuse marriage with Mark? What would have happened if I had recovered my memory the very next day? They seemed to have taken a colossal risk. I was beginning to feel sure that the whole

thing was a put-up job between Mark and not only Rune but various other accomplices, including Renata *and* the Spanish solicitor whom I had not yet met.

There was still a considerable doubt in my mind about the validity of Paul le Motte's Will . . . (strange that now he no longer even vaguely seemed *Uncle* Paul to me.)

There was a further doubt in my mind when Julian pulled the car up in front of the Seventh Cross, raised my hand to his lips and said:

"Thanks for another lovely day. You mustn't get too fond of me. You mustn't."

"Why not?" I blazed. "Aren't you equally fond of me?"

"I'm trying not to be—"

"Then don't try so hard," I cried wildly, "because I intend to go on being madly fond of you, and we're going to work together on the opera, and I'll write more words. You need me. You need me—you can't say you don't," I finished, choking.

He narrowed his eyes and scowled down at me.

"I don't need anyone—"

"You do—you *do*!" I protested and clenched my teeth. "Say it! *Say* that you need me."

He seemed to hesitate, the muscles of his cheeks working. Then he put the palm of my hand against his lips and flung it away as though it burned him—just as his kiss burned me.

"Oh, hell to it—very well, then. I do. I need you, damn it. You're beginning to be far too important to me. I positively dislike you."

"You don't—you love me!" I said and broke into sudden happy laughter.

He kissed my hand again, then my mouth, then got out of the car and moved away.

I called after him:

"Come back later and do some more work."

He turned, nodded and waved at me.

Dear God, how much I love him, I thought, in a frenzy of feeling.

I banished all other thoughts as I ran up the stone steps into the house. The House of the Seventh Cross which was not mine—and now never would be mine. Nothing in it either. But I didn't care. So long as *he* belonged to me—my tall, lean, voiceless, suffering Julian—so long as he went on loving me, I would have all the riches in the world.

16

DURING the three weeks that followed my call to Nassau, I doubt if I enjoyed myself much more than I had done when I still imagined myself to be Rune le Motte. In a queer way, perhaps, I was happier then; bewildered and confused though I used to be. But now that I *knew* I was Rosamund, I had to conceal the fact from everyone. The result was nerve-racking. I had to be perpetually on guard against making a slip of the tongue.

I watched Mark closely. My distrust of him, and dislike of Renata, increased as the days went by. As I fully expected, Mark was almost insanely jealous of Julian, but I continued to go down to that cottage when I wanted, to see and talk to Julian. And he came daily to play the piano. I was delighted because he seemed really inspired to work harder than ever on his score.

My greatest happiness lay in working with him. I discovered that I had quite a flair for verse. I was proud and pleased when he told me that the words I wrote for the libretto helped him enormously. I soon found that he was a man of many facets; not only a musician but a good linguist who could speak and write in Italian or Spanish just as easily as in English. But Julian had decided that his opera would be more marketable these days if written and sung in English. Encouraged by me, he had already approached a well-known, influential impresario named David Camford. Camford had launched one or two new composers with

success and had known Julian in the days when he was singing. They had been very friendly.

Julian had sent the first Act to London and received a favourable reply from David:

> "*If this work continues on the same lines and the next two Acts are as good as the first I venture to say that* The Wall *should be a great success. I shall want it.*"

Julian and I were both wildly excited on the day he received this letter.

"I knew it," I said. "I *knew*. It's a wonderful theme and the music is terrific."

He kissed me and tried to be cynical and failed. His face was glowing for once.

The Wall was the title Julian had chosen for the opera. It had a tragic ending and was a tragic story but excitement and the passionate emotion of young love flowed through it all.

The story was based, Julian told me, on fact, and the main theme was the love affair between a young journalist (whom Julian called Wolf) in West Germany, and a German girl, Ingrid, under Russian domination in East Berlin, Most of the action took place in the shadow of *The Wall*. The main theme, of course, was the effort made by Wolf to get his girl-friend out of Russian hands and into the safety of the West. It was the sort of story that interested Julian. I, too, found it absorbing and was sure the rest of the world would appreciate it. Julian's own sufferings had given him sufficient depth of sympathy and understanding to write well about unhappy human beings. He had infused a tremendously sincere emotion into the opera.

The music was a little sombre but in keeping with the dark cloud that hung over the whole situation connected with that terrible Wall. It also had its lovely sentimental moments, especially during the scene when the young man passed the barrier and was reunited with Ingrid on Christmas Day when permits were given. There was a magnificent chorus sung by the crowds filing through to visit relatives and friends; music full of the mingled anguish and joy of such reunions.

The finale, which had yet to be written, was to be Wolf's and Ingrid's attempted escape—and their death; shot by sentries at the very moment of success.

I kept begging Julian to let the lovers succeed and find happiness together, but of course he merely touched my cheek with a forefinger and gave me one of his embittered smiles.

"My darling, it would be quite out of character. You are a romantic—I'm a realist. Wolf and Ingrid in real life would with little doubt have been shot. My ending must be as in so many of the classic operas—a tragic one."

I grumbled:

"I hate it. I don't want them to die. Don't you believe in romance? Isn't *our* love-affair going to end happily?"

"I doubt it," was Julian's cynical reply which upset me so much that he had to take back his words and reassure me. He was only teasing; all would be well; I wasn't to be upset.

So the work went on, and I thought that some of Julian's compositions were fabulous. I was brimful of faith and hope.

Meanwhile I had to go on secretly enacting my own little drama up at the House of the Seventh Cross.

I didn't find it easy to behave as though I was the future mistress of the House. Now that I knew the conditions of the Will and saw Mark's desirous eyes continually directed upon me, I felt very uneasy.

About three weeks after my talk with the real Rune, I tried to catch Mark out; to test his integrity. He kept repeating that the *abogado* was coming to see me and discuss business—but Senor Iturrbo never came. I felt that Mark was deliberately avoiding the issue and far from anxious to have this three-handed discussion. Then I tried, with some degree of cunning, to make him talk about 'the other girl'.

"Have you never heard again from that Miss Lowe who disappeared after the accident?" I asked one evening when Mark and I were dining out in the starlight on the beautiful terrace.

"No," he said, without looking at me.

"What was she like? You've never told me much about her. Wasn't she sufficiently interested in my fate to enquire whether I lived or died?"

Mark still refused to meet my gaze.

"It was obvious to her before she left that you were not going to die," was his brief reply.

"What was she like?" I persisted.

"I hardly looked at her," Mark mumbled, "I was too interested in you."

I had a strong feeling that he was lying. I turned the conversation to that all-important clause in the Will.

"Whatever made Uncle Paul think that you and I would be quite pleased to marry? A man and a girl in our situation would surely be unlikely to act according to plan and fall in love."

Mark wiped his lips nervously with his table napkin, flicked a glance at me, then shrugged.

"It was just—something Uncle Paul wanted—hoped for—as I still hope for it," he added with a more ardent glance.

I thought: *He knows more than he lets me see. I suppose I'm suspicious of everything he says now but he knows who I am.*

And another thought struck me too: *They haven't been so very clever. If they'd wanted to carry out their damnable idea of getting hold of this money through me they should have locked me in my room right from the start and never let me out.*

It became obvious to me that my meeting and association with Julian Marsh had been Mark Jervis's undoing. Once I established a friendship with Julian, Mark must have realised that he could no longer control my destiny. Julian would have been a danger. He would undoubtedly have asked too many questions.

"Hasn't Uncle Paul left you enough to make you comfortable for life without marrying me, Mark?" I suddenly asked him.

He got up from the table and moved away, lighting one of his favourite cigars.

"Oh, yes—up to a point."

"Weren't you able to persuade him to leave you the lot?" I asked silkily.

Mark's face reddened.

"You're being rather nasty. It was never in my head to attempt any such persuasion."

"But you fell in readily enough with the idea of marrying his heiress."

Mark turned on me furiously.

"You understand nothing—nothing about this business.

I've lived in the House of the Seventh Cross for a long time. Everything in it means a lot to me—more than it could mean to you or anyone else. Naturally I want to stay here. And I am only human—of course I'd like the house and the money, and more especially *you*."

"But you didn't know me when you agreed to all this—any girl would have suited you in the circumstances," I said smoothly.

He took off his glasses with such violence that one of the arms snapped. I could see him trembling as he stooped and picked the bit up. He seemed to be fighting for self-possession. I remembered what Renata had said about his nervous breakdown. I began to feel that Mark Jervis was indeed a sick man—mentally, as well as physically sick.

He looked at me, blinking short-sightedly, his face tortured. So tortured that even I felt sorry for him.

"You drive me mad with your cruelty!" he said hoarsely. "You're always unpleasant to me. You're not even trying to give our—our marriage—a chance. Ever since I told you the terms of the Will, you've been much more unfriendly than you were before. And of course it's all Julian Marsh's fault. You've made yourself a fool over him, and he has prejudiced you against me. Whatever you say to me, I shall turn him out of that cottage. Yes, I shall kick him out . . . I shall . . . !"

He ended, frothing slightly at the mouth as though he were going to have a fit. I was about to rush for Renata when she appeared—as she always did at odd moments—permanently eavesdropping.

She spoke to him in Spanish, obviously trying to soothe him, took his broken horn-rims from him, and began to

lead him away. As she did so, she spoke to me over her shoulder:

"The senorita should not upset the senor like this. It is bad for him."

I had to exert all my self-control not to shout at her and tell them both that I knew everything. But of course I *didn't* know quite everything yet, and there was still the all-important matter of Julian's cottage. I ran after the pair. I cried:

"You leave Julian Marsh alone, Mark. If you don't—you won't see me for dust. I'll go away at once. I'm warning you."

To my horror, he burst into tears.

I fell back and let Renata deal with him. My loathing for Mark became tinged with contemptuous pity. He was a sick man all right; I wouldn't be surprised if he wasn't at times seriously deranged.

This situation couldn't go on. I felt desperate that night. I couldn't even allow myself to run down to the cottage and seek the comfort of Julian's arms. I dared not confide in him. I must keep my counsel until the final pieces of the jigsaw could be found and fitted into place.

I hardly slept at all after that unpleasant scene, but next morning I reached another decision.

I, myself, would get in touch with Paul le Motte's solicitor in Barcelona. I would telephone Senor Iturrbo and demand that he came at once to see me.

That decision proved to be the vital link in the whole chain of events. At least it triggered off the final reckoning in a way unexpected by either Mark Jervis, Rune le Motte, or myself.

That next morning Mark did not come downstairs.

Renata told me that he had seen the doctor, been given a sedative and was sleeping. She eyed me malevolently.

"The senorita doesn't realise how sensitive he is and how much she upsets him."

"And there's a lot *you* don't realise either, Renata," I said meaningly.

For the first time since I had known her, I thought she looked startled, even afraid.

"What do you mean, senorita?"

"Never mind," I said. "Just do as I've asked you so many times, Renata, and leave me alone. If the senor is in your care—then you must carry out your duties and look after him. But *I* am no longer in your care—or his—and the way I behave is my own concern."

I then marched to the door. She followed, and I think would have argued with me, but it was Julian's time for coming up to the House to work at the piano. She saw him as he reached the hall. She lost her own self-control for a moment.

I heard her mutter something in Spanish, her face red and ugly, then she swung round to me.

"He brings bad luck, this man," she hissed at me. But she didn't wait for my reactions. I don't think she wished to have a face-to-face fight with Julian, either. He spoke her language too well.

"What's up, *querida mia*?" Julian greeted me quite happily, I thought, using the attractive Spanish endearment.

I had to bite my lips. I said:

"Oh, nothing. Just a slight dust-up with Renata."

"Where's Mark?"

"In his bedroom—not well."

"*Dios!*" Julian rolled his eyes, "you have spoiled my day!"

I tried to laugh but felt too uneasy and disturbed.

"I'll see you in the salon later, darling," I said.

He stared, as though a little surprised by my odd manner. He was so used to me running to him, glowing, ready for his first kiss.

But I had too much on my mind. I left him to work alone while I shut myself in Mark's study, found Senor Iturrbo's telephone number and booked a personal call.

I seemed to spend most of my time making momentous telephone calls, I thought grimly.

Yesterday I had had a short and rather sweet note from the wife of the sculptor from whose house I had 'phoned Nassau, thanking me for the money I had sent in payment, and asking me to go and dine there one night with Julian (not with Mark, I had noticed!)

I had got the money out of Mark quite easily. As I had thought, he was anxious to do anything in order to win my approval. But I couldn't feel guilty about *that*. No matter how well things had turned out for me, personally, Mark and that le Motte girl had deceived me grossly and worked out an abominable conspiracy, and I was the victim of their financial ambitions. It was unpardonable.

I did not speak to the solicitor. I had put through a personal call. It appeared that Senor Iturrbo was not in his office but at home. They transferred the call to his apartment. From there, a woman's voice answered me—clear and cultured, speaking excellent English.

"I am Senora Camponar—Senor Iturrbo's daughter. He is indisposed. I am taking calls for him. To whom am I speaking?"

To keep up appearances I forced myself to answer:

"Rune le Motte."

Silence. Then Senora Camponar spoke again, her voice slightly changed, rather emotional, I thought.

"I might have known when they said *Pollensa* wanted me."

"Is it impossible for me to speak to your father?"

"Quite."

"I am sorry—but Senora I *must* see him soon—quickly. It is of vital importance."

Another pause. Then a sort of choking sound from Isabel Camponar as though she were distressed. Finally she said:

"I will come myself to Pollensa to see you, senorita."

"You!" I exclaimed. "Why *you*?"

"Because I'm not prepared to let matters stand as they are. Mark Jervis has gone too far."

Honestly bewildered, I said:

"I do not understand."

"I don't suppose you do, senorita. But you are the innocent victim of a disgraceful conspiracy. Until last night I, too, was ignorant about your uncle's Will."

"But you were one of the witnesses—" I began.

"Precisely," interrupted Isabel. "But does one always read through a Will that one witnesses? No, I put my name to it because my father asked me to do so, and I trusted him."

My brain began to whirl and my heart to thump. At long last, I thought, I was on the brink of discovering the truth.

"Senora, I don't know what this all means, but it is certainly time for explanations," I exclaimed.

A smothered sob from Isabel Camponar.

"Yes, it is time. I received a letter from Mark last night which ended my hopes where he was concerned, and

showed me how grossly I, personally, have been deceived and misled. Yes, just as badly as you."

The plot was thickening. It was becoming so complicated now that it bordered on the ludicrous. Suddenly I said:

"Senora—I am *not*, in fact, Rune le Motte. You might as well know."

"So *you* know! Well, so do I. And *that* is something I only learned last night."

"How did you learn it?"

"Not from Mark, but from my father. I can't go into too many details until we meet. I can only tell you that when I was going through my father's papers I made the discovery. After a blazing row with me, he suffered from a mild stroke. We have been staying in Barcelona lately and had meant to go to our house in Palma tomorrow. It is a terrible thing but I know now that my father is guilty of criminal behaviour which, if disclosed, could ruin him and his reputation in Spain for ever. But for the sake of my dead mother whom I adored, I shall not publicise the affair providing *you* are willing to keep quiet. That is something we must discuss, you and I. Now that the fangs of the snake are drawn, I shall do what I consider right, at least where you are concerned. I am an ardent Catholic. My Confessor has told me that it is my duty to put matters right or I shall be as guilty as my father."

"Senora," I said breathlessly, "all the way along I've believed that this Will Mark showed me was not the one my uncle actually made."

"You are right," came from Isabel in a dramatic voice. "The real one is here and a copy of it is in the hands of Mark Jervis—the man I used to love with all my heart, and who has betrayed my trust."

I could hardly hear what she was saying now. Her voice was thick with sobs. I certainly could not understand how a beautiful sensitive woman like Isabel Camponar could ever have loved Mark Jervis, but there was no accounting for taste—or sex. And this was hardly the time for me to start troubling myself about Isabel Camponar's emotions. It was enough for me that I knew that the truth was about to come to light. Isabel's jealousy had brought this about. A classic case of 'the woman scorned'.

There were no more explanations now. Isabel broke down altogether, but not before she had sworn to me that she would fly to Palma tomorrow morning and then drive to Pollensa. She would prefer, she said, that I did not warn Mark she was coming. She wanted to make sure he would be present to see her and hear what she had to say. She would explode the bomb right under his very nose. He deserved it.

"I will make sure you learn to the full the contents of the real Will, and unless Mark makes redress I will put him in gaol. Yes, with my own father!" Isabel Camponar finished hysterically. "Mark shall pay for what he has done. He has had a vile influence on my father and broken my heart."

What else had Mark done, I wondered, and *what was in that real Will?*

"Senora," I said, "please tell me one thing which is of vital importance to me. Do you know the contents of the real Will?"

"I do."

"Just tell me one more thing—! About the cottage Mr. Marsh lives in—you know—the young man who was injured when he was working in Mr. le Motte's garden · Julian Marsh. To whom was that property left?"

"To *him*," came Isabel's unexpected and most welcome answer, "as well as a small legacy, enough to ensure that he need not work again unless he wishes to."

I gasped. I felt quite asphyxiated with joy—pure unadulterated joy for Julian. That news was like a carillon of golden bells. He could work at his music in peace, no matter how small his income. Paul le Motte had, after all, been generous and spared a small slice of his fortune for the unfortunate young singer who had suffered whilst trying to help *him*.

I put down the receiver. I stared around Paul le Motte's study. It no longer appeared so gloomy. The man I had grown used to thinking of as Uncle Paul began to seem a more kindly figure. I could have danced around that room. It was so marvellous that through poor unhappy Isabel justice was about to be done. Mark was at this moment in his room overhead indulging in one of his nervous breakdowns. Monstrous man, I thought. I could hardly wait till tomorrow to hear the full story of his misdeeds.

The real Rune should be here. It was a pity. *I* should not be the one to face up to the furious onslaught that would tear the peace and quiet of this old house apart tomorrow.

From the salon came the drift of the beautiful love duet from *The Wall*. I thought of the composer, my heart turning over. I felt so tense and excited that I had to take one or two deep breaths and count ten, in order to prevent myself from rushing to Julian with the good news. But not yet—I must *make sure* he would be all right.

I was certainly learning to resist sudden impulses.

Mañana! The good old Spanish tomorrow. Somehow I had no fear that Isabel would change her mind and decide not to come. I was sure she would not rest now till she had

hurt Mark as much as he had hurt her. How wrong his psychology had been, I thought; how little he really understood women. His stupid rejection of the Spanish widow, as well as his greed for wealth, had brought about his defeat.

17

I HAD no idea what time Isabel Camponar would land in Palma or arrive at the House of the Seventh Cross. She had only said that it would be 'some time in the morning', but I still had another twenty-four hours to wait.

I was becoming used to intrigue. I began to plan one of my own. I would not warn Mark, and I would say nothing to stop Julian from coming up for his usual work at the piano. He must be here to learn what had been going on, and hear about his legacy. He would be by my side to see justice done. No doubt he would be flabbergasted—hardly able to credit the truth. But they say that truth is stranger than fiction. In this case it certainly was. No story of crime, or no behind-the-scenes sharp practice, or chicanery, I had ever read about, could be more fantastic than *this*.

When Renata came into the study with my morning cup of coffee, the usual sour expression on her face, I gave her quite a bright smile.

"Isn't it a wonderful day, Renata? *Mucho sol!*"

Open-mouthed, she stared at me. She must be wondering why I was being so gay and pleasant. But I felt gay—so relieved—and all the weapons were in my hands. Renata was shortly going to be put in her place. I didn't yet know, of course, what part *she* had played in all this wickedness, but she had a part, I was sure of it. I thought she gave me rather an uneasy look, and when I told her to take my coffee through to the salon and bring another for Mr. Marsh

(which she never did without being asked), she grunted, but went off obediently.

Morning coffee with Julian was always a delight. More often than not I had to coax him to drink because he would leave his coffee untasted while he pencilled and crossed out and re-pencilled his score. It was always like a miracle to me to see those crotchets and quavers and tiny hieroglyphics appearing on the lines as fast as shorthand; and all to result in such marvellous harmonies. This was not merely a work for the pianoforte, Julian was composing a full orchestral score. This morning when I did at last manage to make him abandon his work and sip his strong, black Spanish coffee, he narrowed his gaze at me over the rim of the cup.

"You look as though you're hatching a plot or about to burst into flames," he whispered, with his crooked grin. "Your cheeks are bright pink, and now I'll prove myself a true romantic, and tell you also that your eyes, my dear, are brighter than the stars."

I giggled. Of *course* I was hatching a plot—or waiting for a plot that had already been hatched to be unfolded. I felt crazy with excitement, but kept my silence. I put my arms around Julian's neck and shut both his eyes with kisses.

"It's just love—love makes me look like this," I murmured.

Julian sighed.

"Oh, my mad little Rune—what am I going to do with you? This can't go on."

"So you tell me every day."

"Well, it can't. You know why."

"Perhaps I know why it *can* go on!"

"You talk nonsense. But I'm flattered to suppose that the wish is father to that thought."

"Oh, darling, darling Julian—don't break the spell between us. Just wait."

"For what?"

"For tomorrow," I said boldly.

"And what, may I ask, is happening tomorrow?"

"God knows," I said with sincerity.

He kissed both my hands and flung them away.

"You talk delicious nonsense, anyhow. But I refuse to let you disturb my work this morning. Go away. Write me a few more verses. Write what you think my poor Ingrid would say as she dies in her lover's arms. I'm going to make them shoot her first—then Wolf."

I clasped my hands over my heart.

"I can't bear it. Please don't let them shoot him, anyhow."

"Would you rather I let *her* live, then watch her lover die?"

"Now you're being cynical and beastly."

"I *am* cynical and beastly."

I snatched a piece of foolscap from him.

"Yes, you are. I hate you."

He struck two wonderful chords on those ivory keys which came to life under the touch of his fingers—just as I did, I thought foolishly. He could play on my heart as he played on those keys, and create the sweetest, wildest music —music that could never be written down on any score.

I ran out of the salon. There were sudden tears in my eyes. My happiness evaporated. I could quite well write some beautiful emotional lines, I thought, to be sung by poor dying Ingrid when she failed to get safely through that terrible Wall. But I didn't want to. I could only think how grim it would be if death should part me from Julian, and take him, too. I began to fear things might not go well

tomorrow, and that Julian's terrible pride would eventually separate us—even if he accepted the legacy—because of his loss of voice.

I wasn't particularly happy during the rest of that day. It was all spoilt anyhow because Mark came down and insisted on lunching with me and followed me around, telling me that he felt quite well again but needed some peace, some relaxation *and* my companionship.

He tried to appeal to my sympathy.

"You aren't really giving me a chance, Rune. Won't you come out with me after our siesta? You go out with Julian Marsh. Give *me* the opportunity to show you a little of the beauties of this island."

I thought this over carefully. There was no question of me being with Julian, because he had told me that he wished to work all day. I wasn't going to dissuade him from *that*. But neither did I wish Mark to have another of his turns. It would be awful if he were not fit to see Isabel Camponar tomorrow. I didn't really know whether Renata's stories about his nervous breakdowns were genuine, or whether he was just a hypochondriac. He might be the latter. He was such a dapper, fussy sort of man—he might well be over-concerned with his health. Obviously he couldn't bear opposition, and things were not going at all his way.

Earlier on, he must have imagined that Rosamund Lowe was a quiet little nobody from England—easily influenced—the type to be attracted by the idea of getting married and becoming châtelaine of this beautiful property. Rune would have told him what *I* had told her about myself in the first instance. He had known that Rose Lowe had neither parents, nor ties of any importance. It must have been a bitter disappointment to Mark to discover that the penniless typist from

Bristol possessed such a strong will of her own. He imagined me to be still suffering from amnesia but his plans were not turning out a success.

Pity for him, I had none, but I decided to humour him this afternoon. I consented to go out for a drive, Miguel chauffeured us. I was feminine enough to be pleased by the idea of rousing Julian's jealousy. Oh, I *hoped* he'd be jealous when he saw Mark and myself pass the windows of his cottage. I *wanted* him to wonder why I was going out with Mark. And I took good care to make Miguel sound the horn as we passed that cottage too.

Mark scowled, as Julian (as I had expected) appeared in the doorway.

I leaned out of the window and waved at him.

"*Buenos dias! Hasta la vista!*" I called out in my best Spanish (which really meant 'good day' and 'goodbye'), and I was idiotically blissful because I saw Julian's brown face look decidedly cross.

"That fellow gets on my nerves," muttered Mark.

"One has to conquer one's nerves," I said smoothly, "otherwise they are apt to conquer you."

I had never made such a pompous speech in my life but was rewarded by seeing Mark struggle to overcome his dislike of Julian and talk about something else.

I decided that I wished to see Formentor, so we drove up the steep curving hill toward the north side of the island. The far-away mountains looked magnificent—almost purple. The sky was an incredible blue. Majorca at its loveliest. Unfortunately the road was jammed with traffic. It was still the tourist season, but eventually we got away! I think Mark wanted to take me somewhere where we would be alone but I wasn't letting him get away with *that*. I made him mix with

the crowd. I could *almost* be sorry for him; he looked so thwarted; he kept giving sickly little smiles.

I thought how different it was being out with him—and with Julian. The only time I really enjoyed myself that afternoon was when we stood on the famous plateau halfway between Pollensa and Formentor and looked far, far down into the deep indigo-blue sea. An incredible sight—it was so blue, with long creaming lines of foam—glittering in the sun. The curving jagged rocky coast was wild and magnificent.

Although I wore only a sleeveless cotton shift, I was conscious of the intense heat. My face felt as though it was tanning and I knew that the sun would bleach my hair. I was glad. It would make me look more attractive for Julian.

We passed tall pinewoods on the left and the lighthouse at the end of the peninsula, then came to the famous *Formentor Hotel*. Just before that, Mark pointed out the bathing beach, dotted with little huts like igloos with their conical dried palm roof-tops, and gay umbrellas and mattresses.

Speed-boats raced through the sparkling water. I suddenly envied all the girls there on that gay beach who were swimming or sun-bathing. But after tomorrow everything would be different, I hoped. Julian would be able to take *me* somewhere to swim and lie in the sun. I would no longer be the unobtainable Rune. I would, I hope, have officially become Rosamund Lowe—*his* much more accessible Rose.

Impatient and unable to concentrate, I could hardly bear to sit quietly drinking tea with Mark at the *Formentor Hotel*. I was almost too restless and distrait to make conversation.

We strolled out into the beautiful flower-filled gardens that lead down to the sea, and I thought what a perfect place it would be for a honeymoon.

There must have been something about my attitude that made Mark uneasy, for as we drove home, he said:

"What *are* you thinking about, Rune? You've got a most peculiar look on your face today."

"I am peculiar, didn't you know?" I asked with a high-pitched laugh.

He made a grab at my hand.

"Rune—are you never going to be serious with me? Won't you give me a glimmer of hope that soon we might be able to carry out the terms of Uncle Paul's will concerning *us*?"

I snatched my fingers away.

"We won't discuss it, but I give you my word that it *won't* be long now," I said meaningly. "I go so far as to promise that tomorrow we *will* carry out the terms of Uncle Paul's Will."

"Oh, Rune!" he exclaimed and caught his breath.

Little did he know what I meant, I thought.

Later, when darkness fell and the huge Spanish stars glittered in the sky, I felt unable to resist temptation. I escaped from the house and ran down to Julian's cottage. He was sitting at the table in the lamplight, still working. The face he raised to me looked drawn and tired, but he flung his pencil down on the table and stood up politely.

"Oh—so you're back! I thought you and Mark would be staying out to dinner."

I eyed him through my lashes.

"Would you have minded?"

Julian said huskily:

"My dear girl, I've no control over your life or actions."

But I saw the expression in his eyes, and my heart leaped.

"You're *jealous*!"

Those brilliant eyes positively glared at me.

His face went red.

"I—*jealous*—of Mark Jervis! You're round the bend."

Quite wantonly, I flung myself into his arms. He had to hold me or let me fall.

"Darling, darling, I *am* round the bend about you—you don't have to be jealous of stupid old Mark, or any man in the world. I could hardly get through that tea at *The Formentor*, let alone face a *tête-à-tête* dinner in some glamorous restaurant. It's bad enough having to live under the same roof with him. Oh, Julian, *Julian*, I do love you."

His whole face changed. His arms crushed me tightly. He hid his face against the hollow of my throat.

"And I'm beginning to love you a damn sight too much."

"*Mañana,*" I said dizzily.

"What about *mañana*?"

"You'll see." And I looked around the little cottage and thought: *It's yours, it's yours, and more besides. Oh, my darling Julian!*

It was not to be wondered at that I hardly slept a wink that night. I lay listening to the croaking of the frogs. Hot, restless, I tossed and turned. Of course I began to feel terrified in case Isabel Camponar didn't come, and that all that she had said would never come true, and we might all find ourselves back on square one.

I was up long before anybody else in the House of the Seventh Cross when that fateful '*mañana*' dawned.

A whim seized me to dress up for the occasion. I searched the hanging cupboards and chose a smart white linen dress with navy blue straps over the shoulders. It suited me now my arms and neck were tanned. My legs looked brown and slim, too. I varnished my toe nails rose-pink and put on

dark-blue sandals. I pushed my sun-bleached hair back from my forehead with a blue band, and clipped large white earrings, shaped like flowers, in my ears. I grimaced at my reflection. I would not have Rune le Motte's handsome wardrobe to choose from much longer, I thought.

"Rose Lowe!" I said aloud, "You're better looking than you used to be, I do declare! Love has done this to you. Thank goodness!"

I had spent quite a bit of time since yesterday trying to remember Rose, as she used to be. I was sure she must have been quite an ordinary girl, yet I had to admit to myself that she had had her admirers. That dear, frustrated Peter Wright had once told me that I possessed what the French call *allure* which set me apart from other women. So he had *said*. And I prayed Julian thought that too, and that nothing that could happen this day would come between him and me.

I was passionately glad that Mark and Senor Iturrbo were about to be put to flight but terrified of the effect Isabel Camponar might have upon all of us. But fate had already decided that the hour of revelation should come here and now, and I could not stay it.

18

MARK seemed better—at least he came down for his coffee and *croissants* this morning. During our meal—eaten outside under the canopy of green grape vine, with the promise of another golden day before us—he tried to persuade me to go out with him again. I refused, of course. He accepted this but seemed totally ignorant of the sword of retribution hanging over his head and about to decapitate all his evil plans. Without protest he said that he had work to do in the study. He was still busy with Uncle Paul's papers and library.

Julian came in as usual, and the sound of music filled the old house and gladdened my restless heart. Then—very soon afterwards—I heard a car droning its way up the Calvario. It stopped in front of the House of the Seventh Cross.

Mark did not hear it—the study was at the back—but the ever-watchful Renata was at the window and she saw the slender, black-robed figure of Senora Camponar emerge from the car, because she came flying downstairs to alert Mark. I heard a positive gabble of Spanish going on in the study between the two.

Meanwhile, I walked into the hall and greeted the unhappy Isabel. She shook hands with typical Spanish courtesy and gave me a doleful look from her large brown eyes. She was a beautiful girl, I thought, although painfully thin and too sallow. She had poor health, I imagined.

"I regret that this should have happened to you, senorita," she said in her careful English. "You have been disgracefully

treated by Mark Jervis, and my father, God forgive him."

"Please do not apologise for a wrong in which you have no part," I said, feeling it only right to return her rather old-fashioned speech in kind.

She wiped a corner of one eye with a tiny lace-edged handkerchief.

I showed her into the salon.

"Come and meet Julian Marsh," I said.

"We have already met," said Isabel and looked with some surprise at the young man seated at the piano. He rose and bowed. He looked rather cross at the interruption. But I said:

"I want you to stay here and hear the truth about the le Motte Will, Julian. Senora Camponar has a very strange story to tell us and we all appear to be involved. Myself in particular—" I added, and coloured, remembering that Julian did not yet know the facts about my identity. I was so excited and tensed up, I found it difficult to breathe easily. Indeed, I felt quite dazed.

Before I could say more, Mark had marched into the salon and joined us. He looked pale and grim, not to say scared. Yes, those pale grey eyes of his were definitely frightened as he turned them upon Isabel Camponar.

"*Isabel!*" he exclaimed, and then spoke to her in Spanish which I did not understand, but she replied in English.

"I daresay you *are* surprised. You will be still more so when you hear why I have come, senor."

"Senor?" he repeated the word with a sickly smile. "Are we suddenly strangers?"

"More than that. We are deadly enemies," she said in her melodramatic Latin way.

Watching Mark, I saw him change from white to red. He

began to breathe quickly, jerkily. Julian spoke next.

"I rather fear my presence is superfluous in this—er—family gathering. I will make myself scarce—" he began.

"No," I cut in and ran to his side and put a hand through his arm. "You are as I have just said—involved—and I in particular, want you to stay. Please don't go away, Julian."

He stared, then shrugged his shoulders and sat down, and in that graceful way he had of moving his long, fine fingers, began to roll a cigarette. As he licked the rim of the rice-paper, his eyes looked up at me with a certain amount of humour and surprise.

Mark began to speak:

"This is ridiculous. Surely, Isabel, we can talk in my study in private."

"No," she said, and unwound the black gossamer veil which she had wrapped around her Titian-red head, unbuttoned her linen jacket and took it off. It was warm even in this big salon where the Venetian blinds were kept lowered during the heat of the day.

She turned toward me.

"Shall we all sit down? There is so much for me to say."

"I refuse—" began Mark.

"Oh no," broke in Isabel, "you, too, will sit down, senor."

I thought he looked at her with a positively murderous expression but some of the stuffing had already been knocked out of him. Sheer fright, I imagined, and my contempt for him grew. Trembling, he sat down in a chair by one of the tall windows, drew up the slatted blinds and let in more light.

He, like Julian, began to smoke but I could see that the fingers holding the customary cigar were shaking badly.

"Now," said Isabel Camponar, "I'm going to begin at the very beginning so that we all understand each other. Rosamund Lowe—this unfortunate English girl who was the victim of an accident and an abominable plot—has until quite recently, she tells me, still suffered from amnesia. She has only just fully recovered her memory. She knows now—and *you*, of course, have always known, Mark Jervis, as well as your spy, Renata—that Miss Lowe is not Paul le Motte's niece."

I blinked. I had scarcely expected the senora to burst the bombshell in the initial stages of the discussion. Hastily I looked at Julian. In the act of putting his cigarette between his lips, his hand was suspended. He stared up at me. I could see that he was flabbergasted. Quickly I seated myself on the arm of his chair.

"Forgive me," I whispered. "I know this must shake you. But the senora is right. I've only known the whole story for the last forty-eight hours. Quite suddenly the past has come back to me. The real Rune is in Nassau, Julian. It was to her I telephoned for confirmation. My name is Rose—Rosamund Lowe."

"Good God!" whispered Julian and gasped. "This really *is* a surprise!"

"Promise you won't mind—promise you won't be angry with me, no matter what you hear," I whispered in his ear, my voice agonised.

I saw his bright hazel eyes looking up at me with the old bitter humour.

"If it's about to be revealed to me that you're just a nobody without a peseta to her name, we're through."

Then my heart leaped and my whole body felt a kind of surging joy because I knew that he didn't mean that—but

quite the opposite. But this was no time for *us* to exchange pleasantries. There was still a lot more for Isabel Camponar to explain.

Explain it she did, in her clear concise English. At a later date I learned that she had spent four or five years in England before her marriage, which accounted for her good accent and vocabulary. I began to like her very much. She was obviously an honest, well-meaning person who had been as grossly deceived as the rest of us.

I knew already, of course, that she had had a love affair with Mark. As for the Will—she had been totally ignorant about the condition relating to his marriage with Rune. But Isabel did not tell us about that at the moment. She was describing what had happened immediately after my accident; the story had been unfolded to her by her father. His stroke had thickened but not destroyed Senor Iturrbo's powers of speech. Isabel had had to fetch papers for him from the office safe and then discovered a packet of incriminating letters which he—his mind no doubt blurred by illness—had forgotten. Letters from Mark Jervis. She did not, she told us this morning, intend to go into unnecessary details. Sufficient for her to pass on the following facts:

After my accident, the real Rune le Motte while she was still here in Pollensa had told Mark that she had no intention of marrying him. She had come to Majorca hoping to find some way of getting hold of her money without the marriage. She wanted Nicki Mesurier. They both needed the cash. She intended to join him in the Bahamas. After meeting me, Rosamund Lowe, (the senora continued) Rune noted our uncanny resemblance, and on account of the fact that I was suffering from concussion, she had decided to make a bold bid to leave *me* at the House of the Seventh Cross in her

place. Once I came into the money, she intended to claim it. I had revealed to her the fact that I had no ties, nobody to miss me if I did not return to England, so it should be easy, Rune thought, for Mark to manage me. This, then, was why she left Majorca, and why I—the girl to whom she had given a lift in her car—woke up to find herself in the shoes of Paul le Motte's heiress.

Mark agreed to all this because as well as Rune he wanted the money and did not mind whether he had to marry me or the real Rune. At all costs he intended to remain master of the house and its contents. He had obviously hoped to find me the weak, easily-managed girl whom he and Rune had mistakenly imagined me to be. Mark and Rune had gone so far as to agree that even if I did recover my memory, Mark would try to coerce me into marriage. He intended—if driven to drastic action—to keep me in the house and play on my nerves by telling me that I was crazy; that *of course* I was Rune le Motte, that I only dreamed that I was Rosamund Lowe, etc., etc. He hoped to get me finally into such a state of confusion that I would eventually accept him as my husband, and this house as my home.

Now, of course, I began to understand why Mark's spy, Renata, had been given the job of keeping a stern eye on me: why they had dismissed Anita the little daily maid who chatted to me—and why they had been so furious when I got to know Julian. Renata, of course, was in Mark's confidence —she had had to be. She, too, expected to benefit financially.

Here I broke in:

"But, Senora Camponar—you said that the original Will had been altered."

"It's a lie—everything she says is a lie," Mark broke in, his face grey.

Isabel Camponar gave him the full glance of her tragic, accusing eyes.

"Unfortunately for you, senor, I have your letters still in the safe to which I alone hold the key. When my father thought that he was dying, he confessed all, and he wishes to make retribution. He told me the facts. You can deny nothing now."

Mark sat still, looking, I thought, as though he were going to have one of his nervous fits. I turned back to the senora.

"Please continue," I said.

She informed us that when Paul le Motte died, and Mark had discovered that he was not to benefit as magnificently as he had expected, he approached Senor Iturrbo, and suggested that they made certain alterations in the Will, which would benefit them both.

At that time, the senora added unhappily, her father was in debt and tempted. He thought the game fairly safe in his legal hands. He had drawn up the bogus Will, and he had seen to it that his daughter and Renata were the sole witnesses. The one, innocent of the contents, the other fully in league with the plotters.

In the original Will, Paul le Motte had stipulated that Rune, his niece, should inherit one half of his fortune. A quarter would go to Mark, a small legacy to Julian, and the residue to various museums, famous libraries and galleries throughout Spain. Julian had in fact been left the cottage and an income of five hundred pounds a year. Mark had struck out Julian's name but he could not eliminate the other beneficiaries who already knew about the original Will.

I looked down at Julian. His face had coloured, but I could see his broad shoulders shaking with bitter mirth.

"*Dios*," he whispered. "This is indeed the day of revelation. I always mistrusted Mark, but not to this extent."

"Once again," continued the senora, "Mark dared not cut Rune le Motte out altogether, and constitute himself chief beneficiary. Paul le Motte had already written—which Mark knew—to his brother's solicitors informing them that he had left this house, its treasures and half his fortune to Rune. If it were disclosed that Paul's secretary had suddenly usurped her place there would have been too many enquiries from Paris. So Mark cunningly suggested the addition of this clause stipulating marriage between the heiress and himself.

This, of course, had upset Rune le Motte and brought her to Majorca in haste to see what she could do about the Will. It must, Isabel said, have been an unpleasant surprise to Mark to find himself up against a hard mercenary woman like Rune—with a hot passion for her young Frenchman in the Bahamas.

This, too, was where Mark overplayed his hand. He antagonised Isabel Camponar. Isabel spoke of their unhappy association with all the bitterness of a woman who had been jilted and humiliated by her lover. She pointed dramatically at Mark. He cowered in his chair like a beaten thing. And now I saw in the doorway of the salon the figure of Renata (eavesdropping for the last time, I hoped). Her own face was drawn and yellowish. She, too, could read the writing on the wall.

"As for you, Mark," said Isabel, in a low voice, "you made pretence that you cared for me and wished to marry me, whilst all the time you were planning to marry Rune le Motte for her money. You even asked me to come and help modernise this house for her. Could any man have behaved with greater insincerity? Or greater lack of honour? As for

my father—even he did not warn me that you were planning the marriage with Rune, because you had asked me to keep our affair a secret for the time being. My father had no idea when he agreed to your devilish plan that he was also coming between me and what I then imagined to be the man I loved. But—" she drew breath as she went on, her voice rising slightly, "your last letter finished me. That letter which was a grim reply to the crazy love-letters I sent you every day. And God knows now how crazy and mistaken I have been. When I read that you did not wish to continue our affair, I suddenly realised how vilely I had been treated. I would put you in prison if it were not that my father also would be implicated."

She broke down and covered her face with her hands. To see that proud woman so abjectly miserable, and over such a worthless creature as Mark Jervis, was too much for me. I ran to her side and put an arm around her shoulders.

"Senora—dear senora—he is not worth a single tear. Please believe that."

She caught my hand and clung to it.

"I do believe it now. My consolation is that I was given the chance to bring him to justice."

While I stood there, hesitating as to what to do or say next, Mark gained his feet. There was a kind of snarl on his thin lips.

"So it's all over, well, well, that's too bad! I could have been very happy here as master of this house with either of the two Runes. Yes, either with that wild-cat who went to Nassau—or this pseudo-innocent who is no better than she ought to be."

He pointed at me. I was so stupefied that I stayed speechless, staring. Mark continued:

"Rosamund Lowe—penniless typist from Bristol. She didn't want the House of the Seventh Cross—or me—but she wanted a boy-friend, so she chose that lazy lout in the cottage who after his accident preyed on old Monsieur's sympathy in order to get himself compensation. But—"

He got no further. Julian had sprung to his feet. Before any of us could think, the tall, lean young man, eyes blazing, flung himself upon Mark. The two of them tumbled to the ground.

There was a scream from Renata. As I watched her rush forward and kneel down and try to separate the writhing figures, I thought that here, perhaps, was a genuine affection. The unattractive Spanish woman really did seem to have some kind of genuine feeling for her master.

She screamed something in Spanish which I did not understand, but afterwards Julian told me she warned him Mark was subject to epileptic fits and that if he was beaten up, he would die. At the same time she pleaded for mercy for him, saying that she knew he was not normal—not really responsible for all he had done.

Julian disengaged himself from Mark's flailing arms and legs. He stood up, teeth set, face red with rage. Mark, lying on his back, looked up sobbing; blood trickled from the corner of his mouth. Julian's hoarse whisper could be heard now in the silence of that salon—the silence that follows the storm.

"What you said about me is a filthy lie. But say one more word against Rune—Rose—whatever you like to call her—and I'll knock all your teeth out."

Then he stooped, lifted Mark on to his feet and flung him on to a chair with a gesture of scorn and loathing.

Renata rushed for brandy, muttering and moaning to herself.

There came no sound from Mark. He sat huddled in his chair, his limbs jerking spasmodically. But suddenly the jerking stopped. He tore the signet ring from his finger and hurled it across the salon. It slid on the polished floor and came to rest under the piano. And I suddenly remembered the family motto—those words: 'Let Him Take Who Can Take!'. They seemed to have so much more meaning today. An ironic significance.

Isabel Camponar took my arm, and we walked together to the door, and out of the salon—followed by Julian.

"It is over," said Isabel in a low, tired voice. "And it is written for you all to see. Mark Jervis must leave this house with Renata immediately. And the real Rune le Motte must be informed what has happened."

As we reached the study, I said:

"It's all very well but *she*—Miss le Motte—is the one who is really responsible for this hideous tangle. It was she who first thought it all up, after that accident."

"I agree," said Isabel, "but there is nothing we can do about it now. It is too late. Let her come and take what she has been left. They say that the wicked prosper. But it will do her no good. As for myself—I do not care any longer what happens to me. I shall return to Barcelona and look after my unhappy father, who will never work again."

I sighed and glanced at Julian. He looked back at me. He smoothed his roughened hair back from his eyes. Then he drew a deep breath.

"Come here," he whispered.

I walked up to him and gave him a beseeching look.

"Are you very angry with me because I didn't tell you when I got back my memory?"

"Yes, I am. Why did you keep it from me?"

I hung my head.

"I didn't know then what was in the real Will. I thought I'd better try and stay friendly with Mark so that you could keep your cottage while you were working on the opera. I was afraid that if I antagonised him he would turn you out. Remember—I thought the cottage was his."

Julian's face cleared. His eyes grew suddenly tender. He caught one of my hands and squeezed it, his shoulders shaking with humour.

"Oh, you really are a darling, Rune! I do adore you. And I must try to remember your name is *Rose*. Rather a lovely name, Rose—my Rose—".

My eyes were blinded with sudden joy.

There was a lot yet to be done. I, myself, would telephone to Paris and inform that nice M. Reboule that he need no longer search for Rosamund Lowe. Heaven knew he would be staggered by the information I would give him. Oh, there were plenty of loose ends to be tied up; but at least now there were no more mysteries; there need be no more doubt or confusion.

Isabel Camponar walked out on to the terrace. Julian and I were alone in that study which was so full of memories, both good and bad. I seemed to feel the evil shadows lifting one by one from the House of the Seventh Cross. I even began to like the old house on the Calvario. I felt light-hearted—free again. I couldn't imagine that Rune would ever come back to live here with her rich American. The place would undoubtedly pass into other hands. But what did it matter now to any of us?

"Julian," I said, "do you realise that you *own* your cottage and that Paul le Motte also left you a legacy?"

He grimaced.

"I can't say I like the idea of taking it."

I bit hard on my lip.

"Then you'll lose me. I refuse to be involved with a penniless composer who hasn't even a roof over his head. I'm a gold-digger. Don't you realise that? And—according to Mark I'm no better than I ought to be, either. Just a pseudo-innocent, he called me."

Julian grimaced and shook his head as though to deny this.

"The whole thing is rather pseudo," he said. "It's a fantastic mix-up, hardly true to life."

"But *I* am true to life," I said, drawing near and putting both hands on his shoulders. "And, Julian, remember, I'm just a little typist from Bristol. I'm alone in the world now. I have nobody except you."

"Darling," he whispered, "dearest Rose—you're the girl I've been looking for. I didn't want Rune le Motte. You know that. I just wanted Rosamund Lowe. I owe so much to you. I'd never have worked so hard on that damned opera if it wasn't for your faith and love. Let's get married as soon as we can. We'll live in the cottage if you like, and take the legacy, because I know dear old Monsieur would have wished it. But the day must come when I shall keep my wife on the proceeds of my own work. You believe that, don't you?"

"I do," I said with urgency, "I do."

Isabel Camponar's back was still turned to us. Poor lonely, disillusioned woman, I thought. I pitied her. I even pitied Mark who was sick and degenerate, and that girl in Nassau—chasing her wealthy American. She wouldn't be happy.

None of them, none of them, could ever be as happy as Julian and I!

Julian and I who were going to be married.

After a swift glance at Isabel's straight, unbending back, silhouetted against the clear light in the garden, Julian caught me in his arms and put his cheek against mine.

"I'm almost sorry that I've got to make Wolf and Ingrid die before they get through that Wall—I'm beginning to enjoy my own life so much," he whispered smiling. "Rose, Rose, there's a lot I want to hear about now that you're through that mental fog. You've got to tell me everything you remember about my future wife, from the time she was a little girl. I've got to get to know her all over again."

"I do love you," I said irrelevantly.

Suddenly he drew back from me.

"Damn—I've just thought of something."

"What?"

"The marriage service. Nobody will hear me say 'I will'."

I fell into his arms again, laughing helplessly.

"I must give that poor woman Isabel a strong drink," Julian whispered, kissing the top of my head.

"I'll be back in a moment," I said.

I had to run out of the room because I was crying and I didn't want him to see me with my face smudged and my nose shiny.

I opened the front door, stood a moment in the front garden and looked through the trees. For a second the brilliant panorama before me was blotted out by my tears. But gradually they dried and there was nothing but joy in my heart. I looked over the reddish tiles of the little Spanish houses far, far down below the Calvario. I looked at the bright fruit hanging on the jagged cacti, and the dusty

olives and the green figs. A warm hot haze of sunshine beat down on my head. From the distance there came a sound of a Spanish voice singing.

Behind me the two watch-towers of the old house stood sentinel as always, half-hidden by purple and scarlet bougainvillaea.

The House of the Seventh Cross had given up its secrets at last. As I had felt in the study just now, the shadows were lifting. Mark, no doubt, was up in his room hastily packing, helped by Renata, and would soon be gone. But the old house was suddenly friendly and welcoming and truly beautiful, as old Paul le Motte had wanted it to be.

The midday Angelus bells rang from the monastery. My heart suddenly leaped as I thought of Julian whispering "I will".

Perhaps our marriage would take place here, in Majorca, I thought, in this sunlit village of Pollensa. There would be dancing and singing, and perhaps we would come back here up on the Calvario. Not to the Seventh Cross, but to that little cottage below, which I would make lovely for our marriage.

I wondered if anybody in the whole wide world could be as happy as I.

19

It was raining hard in Pollensa. Dark storm clouds hung over the Puerto. The striped awnings and gay umbrellas of the cafés were withdrawn. Tables cleared. Chairs collected and stacked. Sky and sea seemed to meet in a dark purplish haze as the almost tropical cloud-burst drenched the north end of the island.

Nobody minded. I imagined that everybody welcomed the downpour. In the Calvario, residents listened with glee as the rain filled the almost empty tanks.

I called to old Carmela who was now the sole servant in the House of the Seventh Cross and told her to put fresh towels in the bathroom which had once been used exclusively by old Monsieur. Julian had been working since tea-time in the garden—trying to rescue some of the flowers in their sun-baked beds and to save one beautiful plant which was also dying because of the long-continued lack of water. When that storm first broke and the rain poured down upon the scorched earth, Julian and I had uttered loud cheers, then stood side-by-side, our warm faces lifted to the rain, caring little that our clothes were drenched within seconds. It was blissful to watch the grey earth turn to a rich brown under that marvellous deluge. I had certainly learned what a heavy price a gardener has to pay for all the hours of sunshine in Majorca—that sun we long for in our own verdant country.

Now Julian was going to enjoy a hot bath—something he

lacked in his primitive cottage. I retired to my own room and peeled off the dripping shorts and T-shirt which I had been wearing while I helped Julian.

Once more he had taken on the job which he used to enjoy in Paul le Motte's lifetime. Care of the roses and the English garden he had helped to make.

As I rubbed my long wet hair (Julian had just said I looked like a half-drowned nymph and that he loved me), I thought gratefully about the happiness I had experienced during these last few weeks.

It was, in fact, just over a month since Isabel Camponar had come to the Calvario and told her almost unbelievable story. A month since Mark quit the Seventh Cross for ever. A month since I had started in earnest to pick up the threads of my old life and try to weave them into the loom of the new.

It had not been exactly easy.

Mark had created—or tried to create—an ugly scene before he left. He chose a moment after Julian had gone home, soon after Isabel departed, to attack me with a barrage of unpleasant words and accusations, none of which really came to anything because they had no justification. He accused me of having known all the time who I really was—of trying to get the le Motte fortune for Julian and myself—and of *using* him, Mark, etc., etc. Then when I told him I'd have no hesitation in calling the police, tell them the whole story, and get him thrown out of the house—he caved in, and left. Renata followed, looking livid and scared and muttering imprecations against us as she climbed into the hired car that came to take them to the airport.

Mark had tried at first to get away with his old car which belonged to the estate, but Isabel, who was still here then,

had told him he could take nothing that was not actually stipulated in the Will. Well—he had been left only a few ornaments, and a lot of books—but there had been no mention of the car. Finally, realising that he was defeated, and looking genuinely sick, Mark had gone. The old house seemed a better place once he was out of it. He had had a ghastly influence over us all, I decided. I also decided that when that Will number one had been drawn up, old le Motte had not been quite so attached to his secretary and had even begun to distrust him, which was why his niece had benefited.

Isabel told me that it was fairly obvious to her how Julian and I felt about each other. She congratulated me. She admired Julian Marsh, she said. He was a courageous man, and a fine musician. She also said that she felt sure Paul le Motte would have been glad to know that Julian had found the right wife to take care of him.

Julian and I felt sad for her—it was such a tragic end to her own love affair. She despised Mark Jervis now as much as she had once admired him. She had never, she told me, been so deceived in any man.

Julian and I talked the whole thing over for days on end. He was no longer the embittered egoist. He was kind and helpful. He seemed wholly absorbed in me and in our future, and warmed my heart by his repeated assertions that it was "only because he now knew that I was a penniless typist from Bristol" that he felt justified in asking me to share his life. True, he would have a little money of his own behind him now, but he was worried lest he might not be such a success as a composer as I expected. Then he would have little to offer me, he said. I put a speedy end to that kind of talk.

"Without you, Julian, my life will have no meaning. Please, please, promise never to send me away no matter *what* happens to *The Wall!*"

He promised.

We made our plans. Tomorrow—Julian would see the British Consul and arrange for our wedding at the earliest opportunity. Until then, he must find someone to look after me, he said. I could not live alone in the big house.

"I had to live alone with Mark," I reminded him.

"That was different," he whispered and gave me a long intense look that made my heart turn over. I whispered back: "Yes, you're right! *That was different!*"

So we consulted his best friends, the sculptor and his wife. They were so thrilled with the whole story which they thought madly romantic—they could not stop trying to do things for us. The question of where and how I would live till my wedding was soon solved because this splendid pair offered to put me up until the wedding. So I slept at the farm and came up to the Calvario every day to see my beloved and work with him. Carmela cooked our lunch and little Anita came rushing back, only too happy to work for us, and of course delighted that the bullying Renata had gone.

Everybody in Pollensa soon heard about the drama of my restored memory, and as we did not want the whole sordid story about Mark and the Will to become public, we let people think that nothing was really amiss. We told them that the real Miss le Motte was shortly arriving from America to claim her inheritance (having meant all the time to return, of course.) Nothing was really explained and no doubt many people were mystified. But no one

seemed to mind. There were always scandals, and a lot of gossip afoot on the lovely romantic island of Majorca! Who cared? Friends and acquaintances seemed to approve that Julian Marsh and I were going to get married, anyhow.

Of course I had to tackle some unpleasant moments without Julian's assistance. Not being able to speak properly was for him a disadvantage where talking business was concerned, but I managed to carry it all off quite successfully. I blamed my loss of memory for most of the trouble and confusion, and I was determined not to let any further scenes destroy Julian's peace while he worked.

He was still a bit touchy about his personal affairs and the loss of his voice. I had to handle my loved one carefully in those early days.

I left Rune to tackle M. Reboule. He had seemed so stunned when I tried to explain matters to him. I telephoned to Rune for the second time soon after Mark left Pollensa. I told her about the first Will—rather reproachfully; with no friendliness.

"You are just as much implicated as Mark or Senor Iturrbo," I told her. "You agreed to these dishonest plans—didn't you?"

Rune astounded me by answering with the same complete lack of responsibility or honour that she had shown all the way through this affair. The incredible girl actually laughed when she heard that the whole story was out. Then she 'wolf-whistled' as I read her the terms of the original Will.

"Boy, oh boy!" she said over that wavy, loopy, noisy line from Nassau. "A few million pesetas and no hard conditions! Little Rune *has* fallen on her feet! What a sell for Mark Jervis!"

"Well, I expect you and your American will get married

and come over and take possession of the house," I said rather crossly.

But Rune had other plans.

"*Muchas gracias*. Not for me. Rune doesn't want that dreary old place. I'll sell it. As a matter of fact, it's all over between my Yank and me. I've found something better. My luck is in. After that morning you and I talked on the 'phone, I suddenly met a fascinating gentleman from South America. We're getting tied up tomorrow. Whaddya know?" (Rune had developed a strong American accent.) "He's as rich as Rockerfeller and I'm going to Peru with him before we come over to Europe, if we ever do. We can settle all that Majorcan business through the post and our lawyers."

"But, Rune," I protested feebly, "your uncle wanted you to look after his treasures here."

"You go on looking after them, honey. You seem to like them, *and* living in the House of the Seventh Cross. And you say you're going to marry this English musician. Okay—marry him—and if you want, you kids can have a long lease of my house, rent-free. I shan't ever live in it. Take the offer, baby, and be happy—it's something in return for that accident and the amnesia which did so much for me!"

Of course I argued and protested, but Rune insisted and after discussing the matter with Julian, I came to the conclusion that it might indeed be nicer for us to live together even for a while in the splendid old house. We could let the cottage for a few months until Julian's opera was finished. And by then, we should know whether or not *The Wall* was going to be performed.

I lay in my hot bath on that stormy afternoon dreaming about the past, present and future. Everything was fixed

for our wedding. We had agreed we'd give a small party afterwards, up here on the Calvario. But nobody—not even our best friends—were to be present at the actual ceremony. Julian wanted that to be very private—just he and I, and a witness, he said. *Any* witness.

After his bath, Julian went down to the salon and I could hear him playing *our* song (he always played it to please me, as a goodnight theme). Soon he would be driving me back to the farmhouse. But only for one week more. Then we would be together—always.

I dressed myself and walked slowly round the old house, my heart very full. Life seemed to stretch before me brilliant and perfect. What more could I want than to love and be loved by Julian?

The enchanted music of *The Lover And The Nightingale* followed me faintly as I climbed up the stone stairs of the old tower, to the look-out. The rain had ceased. The air was fragrant with the rich odours of wet earth. The stars were out in the velvet darkness of the sky. A full moon had just risen and was silvering the rim of the sea visible down there on the line of coast.

The late September evenings were growing cooler. The hot rich summer of Majorca would soon be replaced by lower temperatures of October, and the grey skies and storms of the winter would follow. Our roses would be dead. But all the marvellous blossom would be out again in the new year. Spring comes early to Majorca. Julian told me that I would see seven million almond trees break into pink glory all over the island.

And I would be his wife.

I would have forgotten by then that I had ever imagined myself Rune le Motte. *I would be Rosamund Marsh.*

The night wind lifted my hair and caressed my hot cheeks. I trembled—not with cold, up there in that old tower—but with the ecstasy of my secret thoughts and dreams.

And suddenly, with all my heart, I loved the House of the Seventh Cross.

DENISE ROBINS

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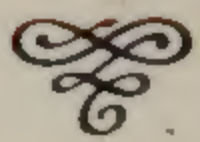

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